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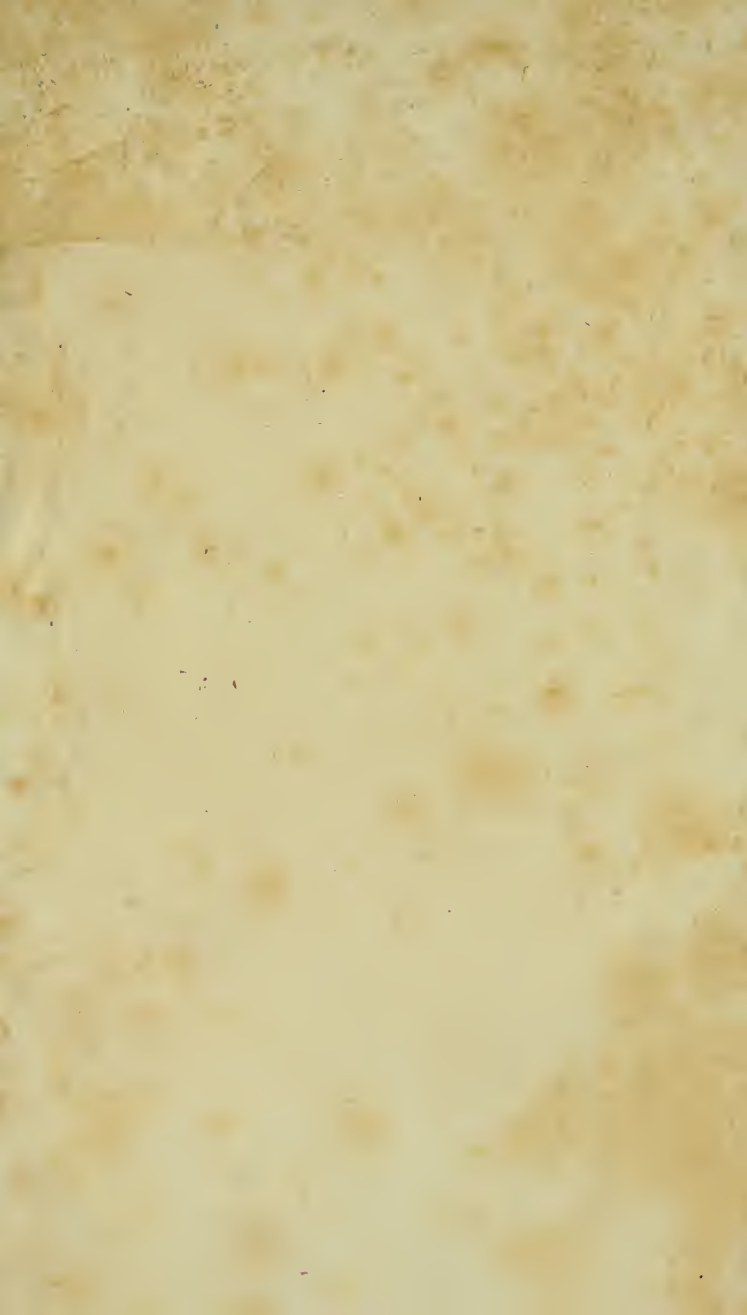
Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

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BAPTISMAL OBLIGATIONS.



BAPTISMAL OBLIGATIONS;

OR

THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

OF

GOD-PARENTS AND BAPTIZED PERSONS.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM M. JACKSON.

“If ye know these things happy are ye, if ye do them.”

JOHN xiii. 17.

Philadelphia:

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P R E F A C E .

The Author's motives in presenting this little volume to the Christian public, must be his apology for thus obtruding himself upon its notice. A very little experience in the ministry has been sufficient to convince him of the need of a short and simple treatise setting forth the nature, design, and privileges, but more especially the obligations of the Baptismal Sacrament. In vain has he inquired and sought for such. Upon that other holy institution of our blessed Lord a much higher degree of regard has been (may we not say unwarrantably ?) bestowed. We hear it styled, *par excellence*, as it were, "The Sacrament," whilst we are abundantly supplied, from the pulpit, the lecture-room and the press, with rich and interesting instruction, and most admirable practical addresses ; all evincing for it, as is most justly due, a high degree of veneration, and all designed, as is most proper, to prepare Christian people for the worthy reception of the sacred ordinance. Indeed

the volumes which have appeared upon the Lord's Supper exceed, in number, those upon almost any other topic of religious instruction. There are Hobart, and Henshaw, and Bickersteth, and Dr. Wilson, and Bishop Wilson, and Adam Clarke, with a host of others ; but where shall we find similar treatises upon the Sacrament of Baptism? In an humble desire to supply this deficiency, the following pages are offered to the public. The mooted points of Baptism are not here discussed. This has been too frequently and too ably done, to render it necessary in this little volume. In bringing our young children to holy Baptism, we cannot doubt that "God favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours." The Author's object and desire is to enforce the claims and obligations of this interesting sacrament. Should all his efforts avail no more than simply to draw out one thread from the veil of ignorance, which hangs over so large a portion of the Church, he will feel that he has not written in vain.

Winchester, Va., January 14th, 1841.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

Whilst we are neither warranted, nor disposed to institute a comparison between the Ordinances of our Holy Religion, we are, nevertheless, free to affirm that none ought to be placed upon more elevated ground, than the Sacrament of Baptism.

Whether we regard the design accomplished, the influence exerted, or the interest imparted, there is none more merciful, none more beneficial, none better calculated to win upon the heart.

It was the appointment of one, infinitely wise, and made at a time, when he appeared in the most lovely exhibition of his character, as the Redeemer of a guilty world. The deeply interesting occasion, selected by him for the purpose, cannot be forgotten. 'Twas after his resurrection. On one of the mountains of Galilee—perhaps the same upon which he was transfigured—he met the little band of his disciples, by express appointment. There, having instructed them, in things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, and receiving, at the same time, the homage and worship due to himself, as incarnate God, he

issues his last command, instituting water, as the seal and sign of the Christian covenant; its kindred seal under the former dispensation, being hereby abrogated, and yielding to one, better adapted to the spirit of the gospel Church. And then having linked with the command to baptize, another duty no less binding upon his ministry—that of teaching his disciples to do all things whatsoever he had commanded them, he bestows the parting promise of his unfailing presence, “Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;” in perils by land and in perils by water; in sorrow and in suffering; in preaching and in baptizing, I am with you alway. Thus, was the institution of Baptism preceded by a declaration of his authority, “*All power is given unto me,*” and concluded with this precious promise.

The glory of the Holy Trinity, promoted and proclaimed by the Church, was the grand design of this sacred ordinance:—and this end, it is calculated, in a pre-eminent degree, to accomplish. It opens to the Christian minister and the Christian parent, a source of most persuasive arguments—arguments impelling them to the discharge of their sacred duties to the children of the Church; at the same time that it places in their hands many winning and coercive considerations, like so many chains of silk, and silver, and iron, by which to draw those children to the cross, and enlist them under its banner.

Matthew Henry, the great commentator, attributed his first serious impressions to his baptism;

says he, "I cannot but take occasion to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism, not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my parents with a good argument, and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument for an early dedication of myself to God in my childhood. If God has wrought any good work upon my soul, I desire, with humble thankfulness, to acknowledge the influence of my infant baptism upon it.

Says another learned commentator, "'There is no argument more moving and effectually exciting unto holiness of life, than that which is taken from our baptismal vow and profession ; the obligation of this is very strong, if duly considered. *

"What a topic of expostulation," says Dr. Scott, in commenting upon that passage, where the children were brought to Christ, "would this transaction give the ministers of Christ, if these parents afterwards brought up their children in an unchristian manner, or set them a bad example ! or, with the children, if they renounced that Saviour, who had so condescendingly taken them in his arms and blessed them ! In what a variety of ways might instructions and admonitions, both to parents and the children, have been grounded upon it ; and what a sweet subject of converse would it afford to the parents, in afterwards instructing the children ! What a plea

* Burkitt on Colossians iii. 9, 10.

in prayer for them! And might not infant baptism be improved to similar purposes, did all, who approve and contend for it, bestow true pains to make it a means of grace to themselves and those concerned?"

The language of Dr. Dwight to the same effect, is more decided. Says he, "the most solemn sense of the obligations which we are under to train up our children for God, is probably derived from the administration of this ordinance."*

When, therefore, we see, even within the pale of the Christian Church, the little reverence which is manifested towards this holy sacrament; when we hear it so lightly spoken of, and learn how strangely its intent and meaning are misconceived, by many from whom we should expect better things, what limits must be placed to our amazement and our sorrow! If questioned concerning it, "What mean ye by this service?" In all probability an answer is returned betraying either a deplorable ignorance, or a misapprehension of its nature and design, no less to be lamented.

"The current ideas on this subject," says Bishop McIlvaine, "are exceedingly low and meagre. So much are many among us affected by views prevailing among Christians of other names; or so little do they think of this Sacrament, but as a serious formality, the benefit of which, if there be any beside

* Theol. vol. iv. p. 307.

that of becoming associated with the visible Church, they cannot *see* and therefore do not *believe*; that many parents, even communicants, are sinfully negligent in bringing their little children to Christ in baptism. But this is not all. Among those who do bring their children, how much is yet to be learned and felt, of the spiritual character of the sacrament; and that faith and prayer and earnestness of soul are as much to be exercised in connection with the outward sign of baptism, as when we are receiving the signs of the body and blood of Christ."

Indeed, by very many, baptism is regarded more as an unmeaning ceremony, than as an institution of Christ, complied with, rather because it is a custom of society, than a holy duty: "Others bring their children to baptism, we must do so too." Or else, it is viewed as a mere form by which the child receives its name, whilst the notions of others again are characterized by still grosser ignorance. A minister once related, in our hearing, a story of a mother who had travelled many miles, in order to have her child baptized, and assigned as her reason for doing so, that she had heard that christening was an efficacious cure for the peevishness and fretfulness of childhood. But even others, who are exempt from the charge of such gross ignorance respecting the Baptismal Sacrament, do not appear to realize its vast importance, to value its precious privileges, nor to feel its weighty obligations.

Says a judicious writer, already quoted, "There

is but too much reason to believe, that not only the persons, particularly the children, who have been baptized, but the parents, also, are, in many instances, lamentably ignorant of the nature of this institution, the truths which it declares, the duties which it involves, and the privileges which it confers. Were these things made more frequently subjects of preaching ; were they clearly illustrated and solemnly enforced ; there is the best reason to believe, that it would become a far richer and more extensive blessing to mankind."

The insensibility which prevails among parents and sponsors to their baptismal obligations, is communicated like a contagious disease, to the young disciples of the Church, infecting them with the same melancholy insensibility to their obligations also.

Among all the causes to which this is to be attributed, the neglect of ministers of the Gospel holds a prominent place. How this neglect is justified, alas ! we pretend not to say. It is strange and unaccountable. How these obligations can, in truth and reason, be shown to merit less reverential regard ; be placed upon lower ground ; be less frequently explained and enforced from the pulpit ; or made to appear less binding upon the conscience than others, is a point upon which we must confess no less ignorance. The conviction that these obligations are as sacred, if not more so, than very many others, to which we attach the most serious importance, increases our perplexity, in endeavouring to account for and

justify this neglect. We say nothing of the beauty which surrounds, nor of the interest which invests this holy sacrament—nothing of the love which originated, nor of the command which enjoins it. It is enough that Baptism does most solemnly bind, by peculiar motives, both parents and sponsors, and the children of the Church, to a faithful discharge of their respective duties. This, of itself, is enough to increase our perplexity, and deepen every feeling of regret, that these motives should be so seldom urged and their power so feebly exerted.

Baptism, like other positive institutions, has suffered not a little, from the proneness of human nature to run to extremes. By some, it is borne away to such an elevated position, that it is actually regarded as the only pre-requisite to admission into heaven. By others, it is degraded to a point of the merest insignificance. The former error pleases well the human heart, ever ready to rest satisfied with the form of religion without its power: the latter originates in a disposition lightly to esteem that, the reason and use of which are not evident at first sight. Forgetting that all the commands of God are of equal force, those only are deemed obligatory, the reason and use of which are apparent.

Whether the neglect of Baptism be, in every case, sin against God; and if it be, to what extent, we do not feel called upon to decide: but we may observe concerning all positive laws and institutions, that whilst the will of the institutor is the sole source,

whence the obligation to comply with them, is derived, yet, if he possess the right to issue any positive command, that is, any command, the reason and use of which we do not see, obedience on our part becomes a sacred duty, as much so, as that of abstaining from the crime of murder, the reason and use of which, we *do* see. Then, as we have the assurance given immediately before the appointment of Baptism, that Christ had all power committed unto him, compliance with the appointment becomes sacredly incumbent upon us.

Inseparably connected with this, is the duty of understanding it, to the full extent of our opportunities. The Almighty does not issue his commands from the impulse of arbitrary will, nor does he expect obedience as to the mandate of a tyrant. He would, doubtless, have us examine into the nature and intent of his requirements, that thus we may know the wisdom, love and equity of his counsels. In an institution like that of Baptism, this is all-important. The duties growing out of it call for daily and hourly fulfilment. It is "*a covenant never to be forgotten,*" but to be remembered at all times and under all circumstances; it therefore behooves us clearly to comprehend its nature, design, privileges and obligations. Ignorance is sinful if the means of knowledge be within our reach. Whither, then, must we turn? To God's holy word. That it is not more full and explicit upon this sacrament, and its consequent duties, does not at all detract from their im-

portance, their sacredness, nor from their obligations. The Almighty reveals no more than is necessary. We must study his will, and search it out from what he has revealed. He has endued us with intellectual faculties, and the volume of inspiration was not designed to indulge us in sloth and indolence. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" and he that hath a mind to understand, let him understand!

CHAPTER II.

BAPTISM, THE SEAL OF A COVENANT.

MANY and powerful are the considerations, which make it obligatory upon parents, to educate their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" many and powerful the considerations, which should constrain the baptized to repent of their sins and believe in Christ; but to the obligations, deduced from the Baptismal Sacrament, we confine our attention.

Before, however, they can be made to appear, it will be necessary to consider the nature, design and privileges of Baptism.

In the Jewish Church, which was something more than the shadow of the Christian, we find an ordinance, to which the Sacrament of Baptism bears a strong resemblance. So many, and so striking are the points of analogy, that it appears almost impossible for the unbiassed judgment to suppose, for a single moment, that no real affinity exists between them. I refer to the covenant of which Circumcision was the seal. It was established in the time of Abraham, and is continued to the present day, in the Christian

Church. The seal is abolished and another substituted, but the Covenant, in other respects, remains unaltered; the temporal blessing becoming the shadow of the spiritual, and the earthly Canaan the type of the heavenly.

The Jewish Church, it has been observed, was something more than the mere shadow of the Christian, for it had much of its reality. One Lord, one Redeemer, one Faith was received in both. The ancient Jews had their ministry, embracing the three orders of High Priest, Priest and Levite; we have ours, embracing the three orders of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. They had their feast of the Passover; we have the Lord's Supper: and as they had Circumcision, and as that Circumcision was abolished under the new dispensation, it may reasonably be inferred that, Baptism supplies its place to us.

The object for which the former was established, and was continued for nearly two thousand years, the latter was designed to perpetuate.

Baptism is the seal of a spiritual covenant; so was Circumcision. This is evident, if we consider why the latter was given to Abraham, as "a seal of the righteousness of faith," that he might be "the father of all them that believe." If this seal were given to the *father* of them that believe, it is a reasonable supposition, that it belongs, by the same grant, to *believers* also. As a seal implies a covenant, the covenant must, likewise belong to all who believe, "*though they be not circumcised.*"

The ancient Jews, themselves, regarded and received Circumcision, as the seal of a spiritual covenant, as may be inferred from the 10th chapter of Deut. 16th verse, and more clearly still, from the 6th verse of the 30th chapter, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayst live." Why then it should be confined to the time and the people of the old dispensation, we are unable to conceive. Why any, under the Gospel, should be denied the blessings, or released from the obligations of a spiritual covenant, as such, we are utterly at a loss to imagine.

We have, moreover, good reason for believing Baptism and Circumcision, to be seals of the same compact, in that the inward and spiritual grace signified by each, was the same. The former was a sign of the baptism of the heart, by the Holy Ghost; the latter, "a sign of the circumcision of the heart and spirit.

Another argument, directly to the point, is contained in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. Here, in the 16th verse, it is said that, "*to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.*" What promises? We are not left in doubt. They were the promises of a covenant, made four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, (verse 17,) which was the covenant of Circumcision. But who is here meant by "*his seed?*" The apostle

supplies the answer, “*to thy seed, which is Christ.*” But on whose behalf, were the promises made to Christ, surely he *needed* nothing of the kind? Evidently, then, on behalf of his Church; for thus runs the precious declaration, with which the apostle concludes his argument, “AND IF YE BE CHRIST’S, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM’S SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.” Thus, we see, that the promises made to Abraham, are given to the Church, in all succeeding ages. They were made to him in a covenant, sealed by Circumcision; to us, in the same covenant, sealed by Baptism.

And now let us turn to the 12th and 13th verses of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle, here, tells the converts of the Christian faith at Ephesus, that they were once “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise;” that is, they had no right to membership in the Church; no participation in the privileges and promises of the covenant, made with the fathers. What other covenant, beside this, is here referred to, we need not stop to enquire; but, from the context, we learn that, whatever might have been their condition previously, they were *not now*, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, nor strangers from the covenants of promise, but had part in both: evidently teaching us, that the old Church continued to exist, though under a somewhat different form; and, that the old covenant was perpetuated, though with a different seal.

This was the wise and benevolent intention of the Almighty, when he established it. Had the covenant of Circumcision been simply designed to secure to the Jews the possession of Canaan, why did it not cease to exist, when that possession was obtained? Why did it continue to be so religiously observed, through so many subsequent ages and generations? Is it asked, why Circumcision was not continued under the new dispensation;—why the original seal was not perpetuated with the original covenant? To this we reply, that it was not only fit and proper, but necessary, that the Gospel, tender in its dealings and merciful in its requisitions, should have a seal better adapted to its own spirit, than the severe and bloody rite of Circumcision. Retaining the latter, would, moreover, have operated powerfully against the success of the Gospel. The Jews had always regarded it as belonging exclusively to themselves, and were consequently led to look upon the uncircumcised Gentile nations, as vile outcasts from the favour of God, and excluded forever from all hope of obtaining it. With tenacious bigotry, did they, therefore, adhere to Circumcision, whilst the Gentiles, on the other hand, with a bigotry, no less blind and violent, contemned and rejected it. It had thus become “*a partition wall,*” which Christ “*abolished,*” that he might make “*both*” Jew and Gentile “*one;*” that he might “*reconcile both unto God in one body;*” that he might remove every obstacle to the success of his gospel in the world, and

that thus, also, "*the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.*"

One word, touching the Jewish females. As they were excluded from the seal, it is supposed that they were also excluded from the benefits and obligations of the compact. This was not the case; for by virtue of their birth and parentage, they were regarded as the covenant people of God.* This explains the extreme observance, which was had, to the marriage connection being contracted within the limits of their own nation, and accounts for the repeated and positive commands, not to intermarry with their heathen neighbours.

So long as the limits of the church were defined by the boundaries of the tribes and families of Israel, no seal, nor "mark of distinction was necessary for females; but, when the time arrived for the cords of the church to be lengthened, and for the Gentiles to be taken in, then it became necessary that females, no less than men, should be sealed, signed and distinguished, as partakers of the covenant, and as members of the church.

We have dwelt the longer upon this identity of the two covenants, as we shall have frequent occasion to refer to that made with faithful Abraham,

* When Abram was taken into covenant with God, his name was changed to Abraham; hence it may be inferred, that when Sarai's name was changed to Sarah, she was likewise taken into covenant. See Deut. xxix. 10—12, where females were received into covenant together with men.

for a clearer elucidation of the Baptismal Sacrament. Frequent reference will also be made to the Articles and Formularies of our Church, believing them, as we do, to be well supported by the Volume of Inspiration.

The first and chief design of Baptism was to seal the covenant between God and his people. Other objects, of great importance, are, at the same time, attained; but they are not objects of primary intent, being simply the emanations, (if I may so speak,) of Baptism, as the seal of a covenant engagement. See No. III.

Regarding it in this light, no obscurity envelopes it; on the contrary, we clearly perceive the wisdom of its design, and the interest with which it is surrounded. So far from being an unmeaning ceremony, we here see it to be fraught with most affecting and pointed meaning. The Almighty Jehovah here stoops to enter into a solemn engagement with one of his own creatures, a rebel and an outcast. "Willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," He here confirms it by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation," and the most positive assurance of His favour. Our faith, at best, is a fragile thing, and God, in compassion to its weakness, does every thing to support and encourage it. The heart glows with feelings of holy gratitude for such unmerited mercy, and we stand amazed at such

wonderful condescension on the part of our offended God. O, to think that He should deign to enter into a covenant, with a poor creature of the dust, polluted and guilty in his sight, destitute of every shadow of a claim upon his love, his mercy and even his forbearance, and condemned to the blackness of darkness forever! Well may this poor creature ask, "What am I, or what is my Father's house, that I should enter into a covenant with the Most High God?" Humble sinner! it is God, himself, who makes the gracious offer. God, himself, the merciful, the condescending Father of all, proposes that you should enter into this agreement. To such an act of love, He is impelled by sovereign grace alone. For the sake of His own beloved Son, moved by his kind and powerful intercession in our behalf, and in consideration of the costly sacrifice, made on Mount Calvary, the offended Jehovah extends his favour, and consents, upon certain conditions, to avert the threatened punishment, and affiliate the offending and ruined sinner. Well, then, might the blessed Redeemer have said, as he stood on one of the mountains of Galilee, surrounded by the little company of his faithful followers, "I have purchased this great privilege for a guilty world. My Father and I, with the Holy Ghost, will pledge ourselves to all, who will pledge themselves to us. Rich are the blessings which this compact will secure. My own tears, and wounds, and blood have purchased them. "Go ye, therefore," into all the world, "teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Now, in every covenant, there are four things to be considered, all of which are necessary to its completeness:—I. Certain benefits to be secured. II. The Conditions. III. The Vow or Oath, mutually given by the contracting parties. IV. The Seal. All of these we have in the Covenant of Baptism.

The blessing secured hereby, is beyond all calculation valuable. "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." We find it in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant." For what purpose? "TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE." What greater good in either world do we need? "I WILL BE THEIR GOD." It means, not simply I will be the God of their creed, the God in whom they believe, and whom they worship, but their inheritance, their rich and everlasting portion. It is not for me to number the blessings included in this simple promise, to measure the limits to which those blessings extend, to fathom their depth, nor to tell their value. Short and simple though it be, there are mercies and favours included in it, of which we are utterly ignorant, and of which we can form no conception. It is a promise which appears to embrace every good which man could desire. In its comprehensive grasp it takes in all that is valua-

ble for time, all that is needful for eternity. "It is adapted," says Roley in his lectures on Revealed Religion, "to the spiritual nature, the deplorable circumstances, the enlarged desires, the vast capacities, the immortal duration of our souls." "I WILL BE THEIR GOD." My wisdom, my power, my omniscience, and my love shall all be exercised in their behalf. The blood of my own Son shall atone for their guilt: his merits shall satisfy me for their demerits; with his unsullied righteousness shall they be clothed. My Holy Spirit shall convert, sanctify, assist and defend them. I will be their "rock," their "refuge," their "wall of fire," their "strong arm," and their "salvation."

This is the rich promise of the Covenant: "I WILL BE THEIR GOD." It runs through the pages of the Sacred Volume like a beautiful woof of gold. It would be a delightful task to cull from those pages the repeated instances, in which God was mindful of his covenant people, and all in fulfilment of this very promise. We might show how that it secured for them deliverance from bondage, aid in times of peril; his gracious presence when most it was needed—preservation in times of danger, and food, and clothing, and earthly riches, and how, above all, it is to the believing people of God in every age their surest guaranty for the supply of their spiritual necessities, securing to them God's unfailing presence, the riches of his grace, the outpourings of his Spirit, heavenly knowledge, and then, ultimately,

the glories of eternity. See Luke i. 68, 73. Rev. xxi. 3, 7. I cannot express the pleasure with which I have examined the Word of God, for passages bearing upon this point, nor can I but regard it as an evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures, that this simple promise is so frequently referred to by its various writers. The repeated mention which is made of it from Genesis to the 21st chapter of Revelation, the very many instances, in which the introduction of it appears to be casual, affords very strong and conclusive proof that all the books of Scripture were the work of one Almighty and All-wise mind.

This, then, is the rich blessing which the covenant of Baptism, in common with that of Circumcision, was designed to secure. In the latter, however, there was another good extended to Abraham, which was typical of one secured both to him, and to his believing children in all ages. The Almighty, after having promised to be a God unto Abraham, and to his seed, immediately adds, "*And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan.*"* But, evidently giving him to understand which was the chief benefit secured by this engagement, He

* May it not be, in fulfilment of this very promise, that the dispersed Jews will again be placed in possession of their own land? Do not passages of Scripture warrant the hope that they will return to God, and perform the great condition of the covenant by believing in the Messiah? See Rom. 11—23.

immediately after *repeats*, in the very same verse, "AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD." This alone is amply sufficient to complete their everlasting happiness, and with this they may rest assured of every temporal good.

The land of promise was, by the believing Jews themselves, regarded as typical of the heavenly Canaan. It was the heavenly rest which was "*preached*" to them, and on which their hopes had fixed an eager gaze. Heb. iv. 1—11. What was the consequence? Why, to the land whence they sprung, they turned no longing eye, for "*truly if they had been mindful of that country, from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*" And even in the promised land they are not at home, for they confess themselves "*strangers and pilgrims,*" and "*desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.*"* Heb. xi. 13—16. From what immediately follows in this interesting account of the believing Jews, we may rationally conclude, that if their chief anxiety had centred in the promise of earthly possessions, the Almighty would have shrunk from acknowledging himself to be their God. "*Wherefore,*" says the Apostle, since they confess themselves strangers and

* Does not the fact, that Abraham lived one hundred years, nearly two-thirds of his whole life in Canaan, and that he had "*none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on,*" lend additional force to this argument, proving that he regarded the heavenly country as the chief possession, secured to him in the typical Canaan.

pilgrims here, and desire a heavenly country, “*God is not ashamed to be called THEIR GOD:*”

How rich, then, is the blessing secured in the Baptismal Compact,—Christ for our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost for our Sanctifier, God for our portion, and heaven for our home !

The CONDITIONS are short and simple. The memory is not burdened in retaining them. Scarcely a child can be found educated in our own church, who is unable to enumerate them. Propose the question,—“What did your parents and sponsors, then, “for you?” and he will repeat the conditions of the Baptismal Covenant:—“They did promise and vow three things in my name.” In three words may they be summed up, Repentance, Faith and Obedience.

It may be demanded, by what authority the Church makes these requirements of her young disciples? We reply, that it is not the Church, but the word of God which makes them. But where does the word of God lay them down, as conditions of the Baptismal Compact? To this we reply, that, although we can point to no passage in which this is expressly done, they are nevertheless as obviously shown to be the terms of the Compact, and as authoritatively insisted upon as they could be in a positive declaration to that effect.

We refer to a few passages, out of the many with which the word of God abounds. That Repentance is one condition, see Jer. xxiv. 7. “And they shall

be my people, and I will be their God." I will bestow the full promise of the covenant upon them, "*for they shall RETURN unto me with their whole heart.*"

But Faith is the grand condition. Of this we have evidence in the fact that, even the temporal blessing was not conferred upon the ancient Jews without it; an entrance into the promised land being denied them, because they had not fulfilled this important condition. "*They entered not in because of unbelief.*" And this was the only cause, for their covenant God had evinced the utmost willingness to perform his part of the compact. Whatever might obstruct their progress to that land flowing with milk and honey, was removed. Opposing enemies fled, or fell before them. Seas were divided. Food from heaven, and water from the rock supplied their necessities. "In the day-time, also, he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire:" in fact, nothing was permitted to prevent the abundant fulfilment of the promise but their own unbelief; for that one cause they were excluded, and their carcasses perished in the wilderness. See Heb. iii. 8, 12, 16, 19—iv. 3, 6, 11.

We know, moreover, that the Almighty became "the God of Abraham," and bestowed upon him the blessing of eternal life, and we are assured that faith will procure for us the same exceeding great and precious gift. "They which be of FAITH are blessed with faithful Abraham;" blessed in the same manner, and with the same rich reward. (Gal. iii. 9.)

Obedience, the third article of the agreement, is repeatedly insisted upon, affording as it does, the best evidence of a sincere and lively faith. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (Levit. xxvi. 3, 12.) "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Jer. vii. 23. See also chap. xii. 4, 5—xxxi. 33.

This condition is also plainly enforced in the command of Christ to his apostles, "Baptizing them in the name, &c., *teaching them to do all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*"

In connection with the Promise of the Covenant, a change of heart is also spoken of, not as a condition, but as a necessary pre-requisite, in order to secure a hearty compliance with the terms laid down, and a meetness in receiving the promised blessing. "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: *that* they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. xi. 19, 20.) "I will *cleanse* them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God." (xxxvii. 23.)

The conditions of the Covenant are not mere arbitrary conditions, such as derive their obligation solely from the will of the righteous Sovereign who

proposes them ; but they are such, as from the very nature of the case, must be fulfilled before the guilty rebel can be restored to the favour, and prepared for the enjoyment of God. No objection, therefore, should be raised against the reasonableness of the conditions, nor against the goodness of God, in making them ; and the Church is perfectly justifiable in binding her young disciples for the fulfilment.

To obviate every difficulty, arising from a misunderstanding of the sacred ordinance and its holy vows, the conditions of the Covenant are separately and distinctly read to those who bring their children to her ministers for baptism, and to each of these conditions, individually, do they vow a compliance on the part, and in the name of the child. They promise, first, that he shall “ renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh ; so that he will not follow nor be led by them :” and here is Repentance, which is one condition of the Covenant. They promise, secondly, that he shall “ believe all the articles of the Christian faith,” and here is Faith, which is another condition ; and, thirdly, that he shall “ obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life ;” and here is the third condition.

The same custom prevailed in the early ages of the Christian church. Learned commentators agree that the apostle Peter refers to the answers given to

these or similar questions, when he speaks of Baptism saving us "by the answer of a good conscience." (1 Pet. iii. 21.) We are told by an ancient Father, (Tertullian,) that it was customary to demand of those who presented themselves for Baptism, "Dost thou renounce Satan? Dost thou believe Christ?" and they answered, "I renounce: I believe." Hence our own Church continues the same practice in her Baptismal Service, and that her young disciple may not be left in ignorance of a duty imposed by so many solemn considerations, most beautifully and clearly does she, in her simple expositions of the several articles of the Compact, set forth their full import. In the first he is taught that the most essential part of true repentance consists in forsaking all manner of sin, affording, as it does, the strongest evidence of sorrow for the past; in the second, that the substance of faith is believing in God the Father, who hath made him and all the world; in God the Son, who hath redeemed him and all mankind; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him and all the people of God; and, in the third, that obedience to God's holy will and commandments consists in discharging his duty first to God, which is, "to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength; to worship Him; to give Him thanks; to put his whole trust in Him; to call upon Him; to honour His holy name, and His word; and to serve Him truly all the days of his life:" and then, to his

neighbour, which is, “to love him as himself, and to do to all men as he would they should do to him: to love, honour and succour his father and mother: to honour and obey the civil authority: to submit himself to all his governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters: to hurt no body by word nor deed: to be true and just in all his dealings: to bear no malice nor hatred in his heart: to keep his hands from picking and stealing, and his tongue from evil speaking, lying and slandering: to keep his body in temperance, soberness and chastity: not to covet nor desire other men’s goods, but to learn and labour truly to get his own living, and to do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him.”

Here, then, we have a clear, full, and simple exposition of the several articles of the Baptismal Covenant: and I cannot but view it, as an evidence of the wisdom, and tender regard of the Church for her young members, that she has thus provided for their thorough instruction, in such an important branch of their religious duty. She takes them in her arms, as the covenant-children of God, nourishing, fostering and educating them as such.

An objection may be started, here, which claims some notice. If the blessing, which embraces the gift of eternal life, be conferred upon certain *conditions*, it cannot be of grace. The objection carries upon its front, some degree of plausibility. But in

answer to it, we reply that, the whole covenant, is a covenant of grace. The very conditions prove it to be such; this is the apostle's grand argument in establishing this very point. "*Therefore it,*" (namely, the promise,) "*is of FAITH that it might be by GRACE.*" "*It is not through the law*" of works to which merit may be attached. "For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith (or grace) is made void, and the promise made of none effect." This is his argument in the epistle to the Romans, and we find him engaged in establishing this very same point, in his epistle to the Galatians, and drawing a broad line of distinction between the covenant made with Abraham as a covenant of grace, and the legal covenant, as one of works.

The promise itself shows it to be a covenant of grace. The Almighty Jehovah was bound neither in justice nor in mercy, to become the friend and Saviour of fallen man. That he is pleased to extend such a favour, even upon *condition*, is an act of his free grace. He was not bound to extend it, upon any terms. His justice, truth and mercy would have stood confessed by the whole universe, even had man been utterly and forever forsaken. The Covenant of Baptism is, therefore, a covenant of grace. Like that, made with Abraham, it is a "*a covenant confirmed of God in Christ.*" Gal. iii. 17. It was the free grace of God in Christ which established the whole compact; free grace which proposed the conditions; free grace which enables

us to fulfil them, and free grace which extends the promised blessing.

The precious blood-shedding and the all-prevailing intercession of our great High Priest, procured God's covenant oath, procured the conditions, the blessing and the consent of the Almighty to grant it upon those conditions.

We would carefully exclude every idea of merit, on the part of the sinner. The fullest performance of these conditions, *merits* nothing.* All is of grace.

'Tis He that works to will,
 'Tis He that works to do,
 His is the power by which we act,
 His be the glory too.

The PROMISE or VOW of the Baptismal Sacrament, is no less solemn and obligatory than an oath. It can be regarded in no other light. The fact that it is given for the faithful discharge of the obligations of a covenant engagement; that it is given through a minister of Christ to the God of the covenant; in the name of each person of the Trinity; after due deliberation; and duly sealed, invests it with a solemnity and importance, not at all inferior to the most sacred oath.

The sponsor in behalf of the young disciple, and in his name, gives this vow to Almighty God; and the oath,† which the Almighty gives to the young

* See Burkitt on Heb. v. 9: the passage is too long to quote.

† The Almighty gave an oath in the covenant of Circumcision, Gen. xxvi. 3; Deut. ix 5.

disciple is, "I WILL BE THY GOD:" and then to perfect the agreement, and close the interesting ceremony, the SEAL is imparted by the application of water, in the name of the Holy Trinity: and as a token that he "shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and manfully to fight under his banner," the sign of the hallowed cross is made upon his forehead. This is not the innovation of a modern or of an apostate age, for it existed "long before the Church declined from the simplicity and purity of the primitive faith. St. Augustine and St. Cyprian, both speak of this use of the cross and say, 'It was marked on the forehead, the seat of blushing and shame, that the baptized person might never blush nor be ashamed of the disgraced cross of Christ.' This custom originated in those early ages of the Church, when the manner in which the founder of Christianity was put to death, was considered a stigma on all who embraced the Gospel, and when he who received Christian baptism, exposed himself by this act to persecution and death."

Water, whatever be the mode of its application, is an appropriate seal of this interesting compact. It has ever been customary among all nations, in appointing seals for their oaths, to establish such as should convey some pointed meaning to the contracting parties. An ancient poet* tells us of a treaty entered into by two nations, the oaths of which were

* Homer's Il. III.

confirmed by pouring forth a libation of wine. Now, although the simple fact of its sealing an oath, were amply sufficient to invest the act with the most sacred importance, yet, when the thing signified thereby, comes to be understood, its solemnity and sacredness are greatly enhanced. The same poet tells us that, when the wine was poured out, they prayed to the gods, "O may the blood of those who first violate the treaty, flow like this wine, upon the ground." Here, then, was the thing signified by the seal.

In some countries it was customary for parties entering into agreement to seal their oaths by dividing some animal, most frequently a calf, and passing between the parts, signifying that if either of them should prove false to their oath, their own bodies might thus be severed in twain. Sometimes, the simple act of raising the hand towards heaven, was used in sealing their covenant vows, meaning that they invoked the vengeance of God, if they did not perform what they promised. In Christian countries it is customary to lay the hand upon the Bible and kiss it, signifying that the individual is willing to forfeit all the blessings therein promised, and suffer all the woes therein denounced, if what he affirms be not true, or what he promises be not fulfilled. So the use of water in the Christian Covenant, whilst it is the Seal of the Vow, possesses also its appropriate signification, which is the washing of the heart by the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of this washing to se-

cure a faithful compliance with the terms of the agreement.*

Precisely the same relation which the dividing of the victim, the libation of wine, the uplifting of the hand to heaven, and kissing the Bible bear to the oaths referred to, does the application of water in the Baptismal Covenant sustain to the promise and vow therein given : it is the seal, possessing its appropriate meaning. 'To pour a bowl of wine upon the ground, to kiss the Bible, or elevate the right hand towards heaven, were, in itself, an affair of no moment whatever ; but when it becomes the seal of an oath, and thus an act of solemn confirmation, carrying with it a significant meaning, a sacred importance immediately invests it. It should be remembered, that to the simple application of water in Baptism, Christians attach no material importance, but to that act performed for a certain purpose, in obedience to, and in the name of, the triune God. Of itself, abstract-

* Frequent mention is made in Scripture of the "thing signified" by Baptism, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring." Isaiah xlv. 3. "He shall sprinkle many nations." Chap. lii. 15. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean—from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezek. xxxvi. 25. It is worthy of observation that here the thing signified by the Seal of the Covenant is spoken of in connection with the promise of the Covenant. Comp. v. 28. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Heb. x. 22. Here, then, we have "the inward spiritual grace," of which the Catechism asserts Baptism to be "the outward visible sign."

edly considered, it were an insignificant action ; but when performed, as Christians perform it, in the name of the adorable Trinity, what could augment the sanctity of the deed, or what impart to it more solemnity or more importance ? Its very simplicity, then, becomes one of its most beautiful features, and its adaptation to the unostentatious character and spirit of the gospel the more striking.

Be the Baptismal water used according to either mode, pouring or immersion, only so that it be used in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and that should elicit for the simple deed, our most sacred veneration. Nothing could entitle it to more. The assertion is based upon the meaning and import of the sacred formula, which may be considered as an invocation to the Holy Trinity to attest this covenant oath, and the act which seals it ; or it may mean, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I seal these vows, and introduce thee into the Christian church ; dedicate thee to Almighty God, and place the sign of the Christian profession upon thee : and I also seal the oath of the Almighty, securing to thee the rich promise of the Covenant, fraught, as it is, with every blessing which God the Father gives, pardon, adoption, and eternal favour, with every blessing which God the Son has purchased, redemption, and a robe of unsullied righteousness, and with every blessing which God the Holy Ghost confers, converting, assisting and sanctifying grace. Or, it may mean, by

the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I perform this solemn deed: or, I baptize thee *into* the name of &c., and then its meaning is, I baptize thee into the faith and service of God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Or, possibly, all of these meanings may be attached to the sacred formula, for they do not conflict, and all impart a sublime interest and solemnity to the Baptismal Sacrament, well calculated deeply to affect the heart. O, if the whole soul be not in the deed, is it not mockery of most atrocious character to baptize an immortal being into that hallowed name? And is it not an offence of awful magnitude to despise, or even lightly to esteem, the application of water, when performed by the authority and in the adorable name of each person of the Godhead? Forever, then, be condemned the listlessness which too often attends the administration of this holy sacrament; and forever be deprecated the spirit which is prone to undervalue its importance.

CHAPTER III.

BAPTISM, AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE CHURCH ; A MEANS OF GRACE ; A SIGN OF PROFESSION ; A MARK OF DISTINCTION ; A DEDICATION TO GOD.

Having considered Baptism in its primary intent as the seal of the Covenant, we now proceed to the consideration of other objects, which it was designed to accomplish.

It serves as an *INITIATORY RITE*, by which admission is obtained into the visible, not, it will be observed, into the mystical or invisible church. This will plainly appear, when we remember that the church is composed of the covenant people of God. The same act, therefore, which introduces us into a covenant relation with him, must likewise admit us into His church. The analogy between Circumcision and Baptism is preserved in this point also, the former having been the door of entrance into the Church, under the old dispensation, the latter under the new, and for the same reason that both were seals of the covenant between God and his people.

That this was one important design of the Sacrament we are considering, may be inferred from the

language of the Apostle, "*Baptized into one body.*" The Catechism says, "Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, that is a member of the church of Christ, which is his body. It is also declared to be "a sign of Regeneration, or New Birth," the meaning of which it explained, when it is added, "whereby, *as by an instrument,* they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church." It was not intended to teach by this expression that Baptism either implied or imparted a change of heart, but simply to convey the same idea which is contained in the expression, "*born of water.*" The baptized person is dead in regard to his condition as a heathen, but alive again in regard to his condition as a Christian.

This is the doctrinal view of baptismal regeneration, entertained by the Church, and with it her liturgical view is perfectly consistent, and both we believe to be in entire accordance with the language of the Sacred Volume. To be *born again* is the literal meaning of the word regeneration, and as the Scriptures speak of being "*born of water,*" which is the outward, and "*born of the Spirit,*" which is the inward regeneration, the word may be used with perfect propriety in the Baptismal Service. The Apostle Paul appears to recognize the same distinction in his epistle to Titus, where he speaks of "*the washing of regeneration,*" and "*the renewing of the Holy Ghost,*" two things, the latter of which differs materially from the former. There are but two passages in the Sacred Scriptures, in

which the word *regeneration* occurs, and this is one of them. Its meaning here is obviously not *a change of heart*, unless we may suppose the word of God to contain unnecessary and expletive expressions. The sense, therefore, in which the Church uses this word is the sense in which God's word uses it—the sense in which the ancient Jewish teachers used it, who were accustomed to speak of those as *born again*, who were introduced into the Church by baptism, the only sense in which it was used anterior to the Reformation.

Deeply is it to be regretted, that a simple word should be an occasion of offence to so many excellent and pious persons in our own, as well as in other Christian Churches. All that it teaches is, that by our baptism we become members of the visible Church of Christ.

Here we have one enviable distinction and exalted privilege conferred by this holy ordinance. Gathered into the fold of the heavenly Shepherd, the baptized become the objects of His peculiar care. Introduced into the family of Christ, they have an interest in, and a claim upon, the prayers of all Christian people, a claim, derived no less from “the badge or token,” which declares them to be members of the Christian household, than from the bond of the fraternal love, which encircles the whole family of the Saviour. God's faithful people are expected to labour and strive for the spiritual welfare of the baptized. It is not simply by motives of feeling, that

they are constrained to use every means for the accomplishment of this end, but by a sense of duty seated in the conscience, and subject to no ebb and flow. And who shall say what interest may not be cherished in the young members of the Christian household by the family in heaven? Are they not all named after one great Head? And is it not a high honor to be allied to such company, and is it not delightful to know that we are the objects of their solicitude?

Another privilege marks more distinctly still the enviable lot of the baptized. Introduced into the Church of Christ, they are as trees transplanted into the vineyard of the husbandman. In the wilderness they might have been exposed, naked and unsheltered, to a thousand ills, from which they are here protected. In the high-way they might have been trodden down. In the bleak, uncultivated waste, they might have perished from neglect, and, unfruitful trees, none would have lamented their decay. But now they are transplanted to a kindlier soil, where many ills, destructive to the soul's best interests, are averted, and many, prejudicial to the growth of true religion in the heart, are prevented from exerting their baleful influence. Nor is it unreasonable, neither is it unjust, that the husbandman should turn away from the plant by the high-way-side, and from the vine shooting wild in the forest, to tend with peculiar care the plant and the vine of his own vineyard; and who shall murmur that he

waters, and prunes, and protects these, though it might be to the neglect of all others? He is surely right, and none may complain.

With equal propriety, and without incurring the imputation of being a partial God, the Almighty may extend peculiar favours to the baptized, as members of the Christian Church. With peculiar solicitude may He watch over them, and grant a peculiar measure of his grace, when they set out with the determination to lead a godly life. "On us Christians," says Archbishop Secker, "our heavenly Father confers, in our baptism, the assurance of much greater strength, to obey His commands than others have."

The promise of the Holy Spirit, by an especial grant, pertains to the baptized. In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles it is expressly declared, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call;" to as many as he shall call into his Church by Baptism.

What promise? The answer may be found in the preceding verse:—"Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." But why was it extended exclusively to them? We may solve the question by referring to the 25th verse of the following chapter:—"Ye are the children of the covenant."

True, others may sometimes partake of the grace of the Holy Spirit; but it is conferred in fulfilment of *no promise*, for to those without the pale of the Co-

venant, no such *promise* is extended. When the showers of heaven descend upon the earth, the field, the barren waste and the garden, alike enjoy their refreshing influences ; but there are times when the field and the barren waste lie parched and desolate beneath the burning sun ; but the garden, watered by the hand of the husbandman, all the while flourishes in rich luxuriance. So the unbaptized may sometimes receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, but it is upon the baptized alone, as members of the Christian Church, and partakers of the Covenant, that God bestows His distinguishing regard. 'The branch of "*the wild olive*" may possibly bear fruit, but comparatively meagre it must ever be : it is only when "*grafted into the good olive-tree,*" which receives the culture and protecting care of the husbandman, that it partakes of its "*root and fatness.*"

In the name of the Holy Ghost, were all the members of the Christian Church baptized : we must not wonder, therefore, nor breathe a murmur of complaint, that He should be more willing to convert, sanctify, aid and defend them, than others, by whom he has been less highly honoured.

They were also baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and if unto him "all power is given" in heaven, it is but reasonable to believe that as he is able, so he is more willing to shower down from heaven the riches of divine grace upon his own disciples than upon others. We are told by the Evangelist, that after his exaltation by the right hand of God, he "re-

ceived of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," and consequently with it the right of bestowing it upon whom he would. 'The same inspired writer also informs us that the very first outpouring of the Spirit was by the hand of the glorified Redeemer. Comp. Acts. ii. 4, with v. 33.

This leads us to the consideration of the Baptismal Sacrament as a MEANS OF GRACE.

In the Church Catechism we are taught what indeed is in perfect accordance with the conclusions of reason and the voice of the word of God: that it is "a means whereby we receive an inward spiritual grace." Not that the simple act of Baptism confers this grace, nor that it is *in* the act, nor *of* it, but that it is *by* or *through* it. It is the channel, through which grace is imparted; but as the channel will be dry if not replenished by its fountain, so there will be no grace in Baptism if it be not supplied by "the fountain of living waters." That it is *possible* for an infant to receive this heavenly grace, and possible for the Almighty to convey it, through Baptism, none, I presume, will deny—none who remember that illustrious example of a child "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." That it is reasonable to hope and believe He will, has already, we think, been made to appear.*

* The language of "the Confession of Faith" is very strong and very decided upon this point, "by the right use of this Ordinance the grace promised *is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred* by the Holy Ghost, to such, (whether of age, or *infants*), as that grace belongeth unto, &c. Chap. xxviii. Sect. 6.

The Holy Spirit, moreover, works by means, and we can conceive no reason why He should not impart His sanctifying and restraining grace through this sacrament, as well as through other means which He designs to bless. And surely it is consistent with perfect justice and impartial love, that the Almighty should open this channel of mercy, that He should regard with peculiar love, and distinguish with singular marks of His favour, and extend exclusive promises to those who honour, or whose parents honour for them, a holy institution, venerable for its age—coeval with the Church, the result of divine wisdom and sovereign love, and “confirmed of God in Christ.”

We may confidently believe, therefore, that the Great Head of the Church, honouring and blessing his own appointment,—will, through this, His own sacrament and to His own disciples, extend a larger measure of divine grace, than to others.

And, who shall limit the operations of that grace? Who shall presume to measure the extent of its influence upon the heart and future life, of the young disciple? What sinful inclinations, may it not eradicate? What evil passions, may it not restrain? What unholy thoughts may it not expel? And as he steps onward to riper youth, what temptations may it not enable him to overcome? What longings after true religion may it not enkindle in his breast?

Is it, moreover, an unreasonable supposition that, God should bless the child for its parent's sake?

The merciful Saviour was not deaf to the ruler's prayer, but, for the father's faith, raised his child from the bed of death: "*According to thy faith be it unto thee.*" The daughter of the Syrophenecian woman, grievously vexed with a devil was cured through the intercession of her believing mother:—and even the servant of the centurion, was made whole, for his master's sake. And shall that parent's faith be disregarded, who craves the blessing of spiritual life for his offspring, and shall he cry in vain, for the renovating grace of the Holy Spirit, to descend upon his child? May not a voice from Heaven, speak unto him also—"*According to thy faith, be it unto thee?*"

The Baptismal Sacrament, administered in the name of the Holy Trinity, becomes, also, a "SIGN OF PROFESSION." And what more appropriate ceremony could be devised, for testifying to the world, our faith in Christ? By what more solemn and beautiful rite,—in what more positive and decided, humble and unostentatious manner, could we profess before the world, our belief in the Gospel and our duty to obey it?

The Church beautifully explains what our baptismal profession is,—"*to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.*"

This is the profession of the Christian sponsor, and into this profession, he desires to baptize the child of his love.

Intimately allied to this design of the Baptismal Sacrament, is the **BADGE OF DISTINCTION**, for which it was also intended. It is "a mark of difference, whereby christian men are discerned from others that be not christened."* Such was also the design of Circumcision, in the Jewish Church.

It is highly proper that, there should be some mark or sign, by which the friends of God should be distinguished from His enemies and by which the members of his Church, in all ages, might be known from those, who are not members. It is for a similar reason that, the flags of different nations, differ in their shape or colour, and the soldiers of contending armies, in their uniform.

The admirable adaptation of the Baptismal Seal to this important end, is seen in the fact that, it is solemnly and publicly administered in the face of the whole world if they choose to witness it, that it is "definite, unequivocal, significant, safe from being counterfeited;" and that, it is, and ever has been, regarded by all Christians and by many who are not Christians,—in all countries and in all ages of the Church, as a mark of distinction.

From what has already been said, we clearly perceive that Baptism becomes "AN UNEQUIVOCAL DEDI-

* Article of Religion xxvii.

CATION OF THE CHILD TO GOD. That the Church views it in this light, will appear from the language employed in the Baptismal Service:—"Grant that whosoever is here *dedicated* to Thee," &c. We can scarcely conceive it possible to make a more solemn and unreserved surrender to God, of the body and the soul, of the time and talents, than is here made. The little child, not only by word, but in very deed, is given to the Lord, to be His forever. All its strength must be spent; all its powers employed: all its faculties exerted in His service. The idol, SELF, must be dethroned; and in every pleasure which he enjoys; in every duty which he performs; in all his designs, and in all his desires, the first grand object must be the glory of that God, to whom he now belongs, by an additional claim, and by the right of a more peculiar tenure.

The parent who presents his child for baptism, does, by that act, signify his intention and his desire that it may thus, in the fullest possible sense, belong to God. He binds him to the service of the Almighty forever, and enlists him under the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The custom which now prevails, of giving the name in baptism, existed in ancient times. It is supposed by some, to have originated in the practice of servants and soldiers, who always assumed new names whenever they entered the service of new masters and enlisted under new leaders. But it is more probably continued from the same custom as

practised in Circumcision ; of which we have three examples, in the case of Abraham, John the Baptist and Christ.

The name is given on this occasion, probably that it may serve as a memorial that the individual has been brought into the Christian Covenant ; introduced into the Christian Church ; baptized into the profession of the Christian faith ; marked with the sign of distinction, and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It is therefore called the CHRISTIAN NAME.

The privilege must not be overlooked, which the baptized as God's covenant people enjoy, in having their title to the promised blessing secured. The application of water, in the name of the Trinity, is the token or pledge of that title. The seal of Circumcision made Abraham and the fathers, "*heirs of the promise* ;"—the seal of Baptism makes the children, "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." But as the title is a *conditional* one, it is for those who possess it, to see that it be made good, by a compliance with the conditions. Let that compliance be yielded with a ready mind and a willing heart, and God will not be slack in redeeming his pledge. His faithfulness and truth are plighted in his covenant-oath,—and that oath is confirmed, by a seal of His own appointment.

The unbaptized have no part nor lot, in this title to the rich inheritance. The Almighty Jehovah is not *engaged* upon any conditions to become their God. True, He will save to the uttermost, all who go to

Him through Christ, but no pledge, no plighted faith, no vow binds Him to do so. By the Baptismal Seal alone, is the title to the promise conferred, and with it alone, this pledge is given to the covenant-people of God.

An important error must here be noted; one, against which a warning voice should be loudly raised. Vainly do some imagine that, as they are members of the Church of Christ, made such, by their baptism, and such acknowledged to be by Christians, they shall be blessed with the faithful servants of God:—that as they have Abraham to their father, they shall be blessed with Abraham.

All the baptized, it is granted, are nominally, members of the Church,—but between the godly and the ungodly, there is a broad line of distinction to be drawn. The field of wholesome and nutritious grain referred to in the Gospel was not free from “*tares.*” The net cast into the sea “*gathered of every kind,*” out of which they “*threw the bad away.*” On the vine were some branches which bore no fruit and which were, consequently, “*cast forth and withered and burned in the fire.*” All these, the field, the net, the vine, are figures of the visible Church, in which the bad are mingled indiscriminately with the good. Facts, in abundance, bear witness to the melancholy truth. Ishmael and Esau, were, by circumcision, members of the Jewish Church; Demas, Simon Magus, Judas Iscariot, Hymeneus and Philetus, Annanias and Sapphira, by baptism,

members of the Christian, but all of them, “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” “without God and without hope in the world.” Forever then, be dispelled the vain delusion, that our introduction into the visible Church, is all that is needful for the soul’s everlasting welfare.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SOLEMNITY, IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THE
SACRAMENT.

WE have now considered the Baptismal Sacrament in its several points of view,—the important ends which it was designed to accomplish, and the inestimable privileges, to bestow. We have seen it to be “*a covenant*” most wisely and admirably “*ordered in all things* ;” and all-worthy to be regarded with sacred veneration by man, as it is honoured and approved by God.

Shall we assert too much, if we venture to affirm, that the whole Trinity are present, in an especial manner, at every administration of the sacred ordinance? May we not reasonably hope that as they were all present at the memorable Baptism, in the river Jordan, of the Great Head of the Church, so they will be, also, at the Baptism of all the members, —God the Father to sanction and approve the act, and affiliate the young disciple,—God the Son to receive him, and God the Holy Ghost to descend with blessings of heavenly grace upon him? And shall that parent be cherishing a vain delusion, who, when his

child is offered up to the God of the covenant, according to his own appointment, imagines a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved son?"

O, if the warm feelings of the bosom be enlisted;—if the "*live coals*" of intense desire and of fervid zeal, burn upon the altar of the heart;—if every prayer ascend, flaming, to the throne of God, what an affecting sight must the administration of the Baptismal Sacrament be! Angels may delight to gaze upon it,—

"For, 'twas to bless such souls as these,
The God of angels came."

The minister stands, as it were, between God and the child,—as the ambassador of Christ, commissioned, to administer the seal of the covenant, thus confirming the mutual vow and promise betwixt them made. He stands also between God and the parent;—receiving the child *from* the parent, *for* God.

O what a sight of deep solemnity and of absorbing interest is this! A Christian parent, or some faithful Christian friend, standing beside the hallowed font, to perform the most sacred duty of parental love, or one of the most solemn and self-denying acts of Christian sympathy! With a heart, deeply affected by a sense of the heavy responsibility, which he is about to assume;—with warm affection for the immortal being entrusted to his care;—eternity, full in view;—the congregation of God's people, bearing witness to the deed;—he stands to assent to the treaty

which Almighty God proposes. In heart, desiring for the little infant, the promised blessing, and in his judgment approving the conditions,—to secure the one, he does not hesitate to lay the other upon him, by a solemn vow. With a becoming humility, and a firm reliance upon Almighty aid, he ventures to obligate himself, by most serious considerations, to put forth every exertion to make the young disciple faithful and true to his Baptismal vows, or to see that it be done. He rests upon the promise that, to faithful instruction, combined with importunate and fervent prayer, the blessing of God's grace shall be imparted, and he confidently believes that the Holy Spirit will descend and do that, which, without the Holy Spirit, could not be done. The affecting solemnity is over. The deed is registered on high. What interest from that moment gathers round the young soldier! The mother takes him back to her bosom,—

“ With Jesus' mark impressed,
To nurse for Jesus' sake,”—

a child of prayer,—an inheritor of the golden promise,—dedicated to God,—introduced into His Church, and an object of deeper interest to his parents, to Christian people and to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in whose hallowed name he has been baptized. For that young disciple, the congregation of faithful Christians, pour forth their united supplication, and to him, and to every baptized person, young and old,

the minister of Christ turns with an eye of tenderest regard, of watchful anxiety, and of deep solicitude, as one, for whom he is bound to pray with peculiar fervency; to whose eternal interests, peculiar obligations urge him to be faithful, and upon whom, the Church of the living God has a peculiar claim.

From the position, at which we have contemplated the Baptismal Covenant, we are compelled to the belief that, there are singular and exclusive facilities, enjoyed by every one within its pale, for the great work of salvation. If the parent or sponsor who brings his child into this solemn engagement, come with sincerity of purpose and confiding faith; and if the child himself, so soon as he shall be able to learn, be made to feel his baptismal responsibilities, and to realize and appreciate his privileges, rich will be the promise of a holy life. Here, we have seen, he has a share in the anxieties and prayers of the people of God,—an especial claim upon the anxieties and prayers of his ministers; a new channel of grace is opened for him, and the faithfulness and truth of God, are pledged for his everlasting welfare. Encouraged by such animating assurances, he is enabled by the ardour, which the certainty of success imparts, to surmount many obstacles and to bear up under many discouragements which would otherwise impede his upward progress.

From all that has been said, we perceive the great importance of this Holy Sacrament, and the consequent duty devolving upon every parent, to secure its inestimable privileges for his children.

There are declarations in the word of God, the import of which, is fearful indeed, and should carry to the bosom of the ungodly parent the most serious apprehensions, for himself and his offspring. We are not ignorant, that a meaning has been attached to these passages, differing from that which we have adopted. Be this as it may, the legitimacy of the inference will hardly be questioned, that there is a fearful risk in neglecting this appointment of our Lord.

The ungodly parent by refusing to honour this Holy Sacrament, refuses to honour the adorable Trinity. In despising the Institution, he despises its Author also. The consequences to his children none may foresee. The bare influence of this neglect, to say nothing more, must operate most balefully upon them in after years, making them to look with deep-rooted prejudice, or at least, with heedless indifference, upon *all* the requirements of the Gospel.

“The uncircumcised man-child, shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.” Shall the unbaptized be more lightly dealt with? Is it a venial offence to despise this holy covenant, approved by the Son of God, and with a new seal commanded to all people, of all nations, when the same covenant, in the Jewish Church, could not be so despised without the most unhappy consequences?

Reflect, ungodly parent!—upon what you are doing, by withholding your children from Christian

Baptism! You determine that, so long as you can effect it, they shall have no part nor lot with the people of God! You exclude them from the rights and privileges of the Christian Church! You manifest a decided unwillingness that they should become, in any sense whatever, members of the family of Christ;—a preference that they should live as heathen! You cut them off from the blessings of the Gospel! You deny the debt of love and of obedience which they owe to God! You close with your own hand, one great channel of mercy, against their souls! You exclude them from the favour of God; from all interest, in the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and from all the blessings, conferred by the Holy Ghost!

Such is the cruelty of that parent who deliberately and in opposition to the light of the Gospel, refuses to bring his child to holy Baptism.

But, although compelled to anticipate the most melancholy results, from such disregard of this Institution of our religion, it must, nevertheless, be admitted, that there are cases in which the unbaptized stand acquitted of every charge of guilt, and consequently, possessing the other essential requisites, may be assured of the favour of God. The Church Catechism says: not that Baptism is absolutely and essentially, but “generally necessary to salvation.” There may be a pardonable ignorance of the duty, such as we find among the illiterate, and others who are without the means of searching the Word of

God, and among others, again, who are living in places destitute of the ministrations of the Gospel. But, let it be remembered, that ignorance with its fruits, ceases to be venial when the means of information are within our reach. Or there may be unavoidable circumstances, debarring the individual from the holy ordinance. These, an all-merciful God will not permit to hinder the exercise of his love, to limit the workings of his grace, nor to obstruct the salvation of a repenting and believing sinner. We have no reason for believing that either Shem, Melchizedek or Lot were circumcised, nor have we any positive grounds for believing the thief upon the cross to have been baptized, and yet all of them, believing in the Son of God, were saved.

If, however, the venial rejection of Baptism is to be confined to the two cases, just now mentioned, it behoves the tender parent well to weigh the reasons on which he rejects it; for let him rest assured that, if it be not a calm, deliberate and conscientious act on his part, he jeopardizes the best interests of himself and his children by doing so.

But for those, upon whose brow the seal of the covenant has been placed, what rich and confident hopes may we cherish,—hopes for their conversion to God,—hopes for their victory over the world,—hopes for their salvation? And what abundant cause for gratitude is theirs! Invested with these high privileges;—sweetly wooed to the Saviour's arms by such animating pledges of acceptance;—assured so posi-

tively of the grace of the Holy Spirit ;—their hopes of eternal life, grounded upon such strong security, enviable, indeed, does their lot become !

It is with marked propriety that the Church calls upon the great congregation in two distinct parts of the Baptismal Service, before and after the administration, “faithfully and devoutly” “to give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits,” conferred upon the young disciple; and it is in view of all these, the distinctive honours and privileges of Baptism, “and the promises of God made to him in that sacrament,” that she teaches her young disciple, also, the lesson of holy gratitude,—“And I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation.”

CHAPTER V.

THE SPONSORIAL OFFICE.

IN the Church, whose faith and worship we have adopted, there is an office, so interesting in its nature; so serious in its responsibilities, but by many, so lightly esteemed, that it appears to demand more than a passing notice. I refer to that of Sponsors in Baptism.

The motives which first led to the appointment of this office, were founded upon a wise and provident regard for the purity of the Church and the everlasting welfare of her disciples. Hitherto, it had been customary for parents to act as the Sponsors of their children. Whatever obligations for their religious instruction, were contracted in Baptism, were contracted by the parents,—whatever responsibilities were assumed on their behalf, were assumed by those, whom nature had appointed their proper guardians. But after a time, the Church began, more seriously to consider, whether a wiser expedient might not be adopted, in order to secure the proper training of her young members. She began to reflect, that parents, by the ties of affinity, were

already obligated for the religious education of their children. She, therefore, determined to call in other suitable persons, upon whom no such responsibility rested, and upon whom, the child had no such natural claim; thus obtaining much stronger security for the accomplishment of its religious instruction, than by simply enhancing the obligations of its parent.

Herein, the American, differs from the English Church. In the latter, the ancient practice of requiring Godfathers and Godmothers is still adhered to;—while in the former, parents, “if it be desired,” are admitted as sponsors for their children. If faithful and conscientious persons can be found, who will consent to assume the responsibilities of this sacred and truly Christian office, we may cherish stronger hopes that, nothing pertaining to the child’s eternal welfare, will be neglected;—and, with surer confidence may we anticipate the day, when the Church shall possess in him, a faithful, consistent and devoted member; and the holy Saviour, a bold and valiant soldier of his Cross.

All-sacred and binding, as are the duties, growing out of the parental relationship, we must believe them to be made more sacred and more binding, by the obligations of the Baptismal Sacrament. Nevertheless, it is decidedly preferable, that another should enter into those obligations,—and the parent, if conscientious and believing, will be sufficiently animated to the discharge of his sacred duties, by the

kindred tie which unites him to his child. As, in mercantile transactions, the creditor requires the name of an endorser upon a bond, that the payment of the debt, may, by this additional security, be made more sure; so, in securing the proper education of the children of the Church, it is altogether desirable that, others should obligate themselves to impart it, in case the parent should fail; or by the unseen accidents of life; or otherwise, be prevented from discharging his duty.

This was the simple and wise provision, intended in the appointment of this office. Let it not, therefore, be imagined, when a sponsor binds himself for the religious training of a child, that the parent need have no further concern about it. A conscience, thus easily pacified; parental solicitude thus easily made to slumber, can find no place in the bosom of him who regards his child, as destined to an immortality of misery or glory. But, lest the error be embraced in good faith, it should be remembered that, sponsors are not admitted to encourage parental neglect, nor to supersede the necessity of parental instruction. There can be no justification for the one,—no release from the other. The parent can resort to no expedient by which to extricate himself from those obligations to his child, which nature and nature's God have laid upon him. Were an hundred sponsors to pledge themselves for its religious education, that would not in the smallest degree affect *his* duty, as a parent, nor exonerate him from the faith-

ful discharge of it. The burden of his responsibilities may be augmented, and he may be laid under *additional* obligations to his child; but no considerations whatever can diminish the one, nor detract from the weighty import of the other.

In the sponsorial office, therefore, he can find no apology for any, the least neglect; no justification for any unconcern respecting these, the most important of all his parental duties.

With the same degree of plausibility might a debtor reason himself out of all obligation for the amount of his bond, on the ground that the name of his endorser was appended to it.

The very language of the Church, in addressing the sponsor, implies that the religious training of her young member is expected at the hands of his parents, and at the hands of the sponsor only in case of their neglect, "Ye are *to see* that this infant be taught," &c. There is no delegation of the work of religious training here. It rests upon the parents, and they cannot transfer it to others.

It is a question, the responsibility of the decision of which I do not wish to assume, and yet too important to be overlooked, how far, in case of parental neglect, the obligations of a sponsor extend, and when they may be said to have been faithfully discharged?

Whatever means are calculated to advance the spiritual interests of his godchild, he is bound to employ, and to avert, if it be in his power, whatever

might prove detrimental. In other words, he must put forth every endeavour to induce him, at a proper age, from a proper motive, and in a proper manner, to ratify and confirm his baptismal vows. This embraces the whole range of his responsibilities. But the point at which the question presents the difficulty, is the degree of authority which rightfully belongs to this office. In things of a temporal nature, he has no right to interfere, unless it be in cases, in which he believes their tendency to be for good or evil, and then it may become his duty to advise accordingly. Many such things will present themselves to the eye of the conscientious sponsor, and wherever there is the most remote probability, that they will prove injurious or beneficial to the growth of heavenly virtue in the soul, he should, by dint of unwearied perseverance, and affectionate entreaty, endeavour to obstruct or advance them as the case may be.

We doubt not, but such interference of the sponsor will oft-times be deemed officious, and oft-times it may in reality be so; but whenever a course of conduct is about to be adopted, in relation to the young disciple, which has any bearing upon his eternal welfare, interference, so far from being officious, becomes a bounden duty. There are many things of a temporal nature, pleasures, occupations, reading, company, the baleful influence of which may be disputed. All that the faithful sponsor can then do, is to use every persuasion by which to change the views and intentions of the parent. Frequently, in

the discharge of his duty, this clashing of opinions may occur, and he may frequently be perplexed with doubts, as to the course to be pursued; but, guided by a deep sense of his responsibilities, and a small share of Christian prudence, aided, also, and directed by his heavenly counsellor; no fear but he will do that which is right, and which conscience will approve.

But doubtful as he may often be, unnumbered instances will come before him, in which his course is plain as if 'twere written with a sunbeam. Whenever there is a palpable neglect of duty, or a departure from the path of moral rectitude, he should step in to chide the one, or to reprove the other. Absence from the house of God; a violation of His Sabbath; neglect of His holy Word; a vain or idle utterance of His holy name, are all things, over which the conscientious sponsor will keep a watchful eye, impelled to such a vigilant regard, by the whole burden of his obligations. To every thing else, intimately connected with the soul's best interests, his cognizance must extend; and by all those touching considerations, with which his anxious solicitude will supply him, will he endeavour to wean his sacred charge from the paths of folly, and win him to the ways of true religion.

Too many are there, among the ungodly, who fear not rashly to contract these sacred obligations. Ignorant of the duties, inseparately linked with this interesting office, and blind to all the momentous ia-

terests which it was designed to advance, they have gone to the Baptismal font; laid the most sacred vows upon their godchildren, and returned to their homes listless and unconcerned; with hearts, unaffected by the solemnity of the deed in which they had participated, and altogether unprepared, by any seriousness of feeling, for meeting the responsibilities which they had then assumed. A few years rolled by. The children of Christ's flock had already passed the line, which separates the days of unconscious infancy from the time at which they were "*able to learn.*" Were they instructed in holy things? Were they told "what a solemn vow, promise and profession," was made in their names at their baptism? Were they taught the necessity of faith in a crucified Redeemer? No. Blind to the light of eternal Truth, they must have lived and died, so far as it depended upon their sponsors to communicate it. No godly instruction was imparted—no fervent supplications offered at a throne of grace. The children of the Church have learned no lessons of goodness in their sponsor's lives; nor from their lips have they ever heard of their sacramental obligations, to devote themselves to Jesus Christ. Faithless godparents! Miserable security theirs! Ungodly themselves, they knew not how to teach godliness to others. Insensible themselves to the vast importance of eternal things, they had no eloquence by which to make others sensible of it. So that they not only undertook what they never *intended*, but were altogether *incompetent* to perform.

Were the serious responsibilities resting upon those who enter into the sponsorial relationship properly understood; were they viewed in all their magnitude, and comprehended in all their momentous bearings, few would be found bold enough thus to desecrate this sacred office. The most reckless would shrink from taking part in such a solemn transaction. His arm would be palsied, ere it were put forth to such an act of bold hypocrisy. His tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth, ere it mocked the majesty of heaven, by giving utterance to a baptismal prayer.

Ungodly Sponsor! reflect upon what you have done! You have baptized your godchild into a profession, which, all your life long, you have discarded, and in God's holy temple did you avow what, by your irreligion you have emphatically disavowed. You have publicly given your godchild to the Almighty, and have decidedly refused to give yourself. You have laid upon him the most sacred obligations to renounce what you never did renounce; to believe what you never did believe, and to do what you never have done.

But why need I dwell upon such mockery of heaven, or upon the contempt thrown upon this holy ordinance by your own hand. The heart which could not be affected by the deep solemnity of its administration, would hardly be made to feel by any exhibition of the guilt it then contracted.

But whilst such a rash participation in this holy ceremony is decidedly censurable, the opposite error

must be carefully avoided. The conscientious Christian may err, in refusing to undertake the duties of the sponsorial relationship. Viewing them in all their magnitude, and fully aware of the obstacles to be encountered in the discharge of them, he may be disposed to shrink from the task. Oft-times, indeed, he may be actuated by motives of Christian prudence, and a well-grounded apprehension of the utter impracticability of doing a sponsor's part.

In such cases, we should deem him prudent in declining the office; but it is very questionable, whether, in any others, he is justifiable in doing so. For the good of the Church; for the preservation of her purity; for the welfare of an immortal soul, and for the honour of the Sacrament, it may become his *duty* to enter into these obligations. If they be serious and sacred, the greater reason why a faithful Christian should consent to assume them. Should the parent be true to his own high trust, and train up his "child in the way he should go," why, then the sponsor may congratulate himself, that he is relieved from such an arduous task. But if that little child should not have pious parents to tell him of the love of a Saviour, and the method of salvation through his blood, O, would it not be cruel to shrink from undertaking the charitable work of teaching him these heavenly truths? And what if you should be successful! O, how pleasing the reflection which would follow you through the ages of eternity, that you had been the honoured instrument of turning

one lost sinner to righteousness! There is a peculiar distinction in reserve for such, "They shall shine as the stars forever and ever." But what if you should fail? You have striven to win your god-child to the cross of the Redeemer; you have contended with difficulties, and have laboured perseveringly for the accomplishment of your object; but all your exertions have been unavailing. What then? You have met your sponsorial obligations, and an approving conscience may be yours. You have done what you could; an angel could do no more.

Nevertheless, before you consent to assume the responsibility of a sponsor in Baptism, it behoves you to weigh the matter well. There are too many solemn and sacred considerations involved to admit of a hasty or thoughtless assumption of these obligations.

In relation to yourself, there are many things to be considered, which might render it impossible for you to meet them. The place of your abode may probably be changed. Children of your own may possibly demand all your time. Your bodily health may interpose another obstacle; and thus, you may clearly foresee that the alternative will be denied you, either of seeing the child religiously educated by its parents, or of doing it yourself. But, if no real impediment exist, and whether there do or not, must be left to the decision of your own conscience, then we conceive it to be the part of Christian

kindness and sympathy to undertake the sacred charge.

But let there be a perfect understanding with the parents of the child, especially if they be not professed Christians, for in that case, there is a strong probability of the work of religious culture devolving upon yourself. Will you oppose or hinder me, in training up your child, as a soldier of the cross? Will you consent that I shall do all in my power to withdraw his affections from the idle and frivolous pleasures of the world, and from the company of wicked associates? Is it your desire that he should live as becomes the Christian profession, and will you agree that I shall teach and persuade him so to do? These are questions, which you should have clearly answered, before consenting to act as sponsor for any child. Give the parents perfectly to understand your views of the nature and force of these obligations, that they are laid upon you, in order to secure the proper training of the young members of Christ's flock, that the Church expects that training first, at their hands, but, in case of their neglect, at your own.

He who is not utterly blind to the importance of eternal things, nor morbidly tenacious of his parental authority, will easily comprehend your motive, and gladly consent to abet you, in the performance of your sponsorial duties.

It will have been observed from what has now been said, that the sponsor in Baptism stands

pledged for two distinct parties, the parent and the child; for two distinct objects, the religious education of the young disciple, and for his confirmation at a proper age of his baptismal vows. This view of his office may enable him more clearly to perceive the nature of its duties, and the considerations which impose them.

CHAPTER VI.

OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST BRINGING LITTLE CHILDREN INTO THE COVENANT OF BAPTISM: THE PARENT'S RIGHT SO TO DO.

OBJECTIONS, it is well known, have been raised against bringing young children into the Baptismal Compact. We notice some of the most plausible.

It is urged by some that, "they cannot make such a solemn vow, because there is a fearful risk of its being broken and of their thus contracting the guilt of perjury and its consequences."

In answer to this we observe that the sponsor makes no promise nor vow for himself.

What he does, is on behalf of his godchild. He lays upon *him* the vow. He promises, "in the name of this child," that he shall renounce, &c. His is the guilt, and his the loss, if the vow be broken. True, there are weighty obligations pressing upon the sponsor; but they are not the obligations of a promise nor of a vow.

Others object, that they undertake what they cannot perform, in other words, that they undertake an impossibility: This objection originates in an entire

misunderstanding of the nature of the sponsorial engagement. What does the sponsor in Baptism, undertake? Surely, not positively and without fail, to compel his godchild to a ratification of his early vows:—but simply to use every means to effect it. That you cannot bend his will into accordance with your own, is readily admitted, but does that render the objection more valid? You would hardly urge this excuse, nor act upon the same principle, were worldly interests at stake? Without a moment's hesitation, you would enter into an engagement for your child, binding him by conditions, hard indeed, were a large and valuable estate, or coffers filled with gold, to be secured by the fulfilment. Let us imagine such a case. We will suppose yourself, and family, reduced to abject poverty. A wealthy prince goes to your wretched abode and makes a kind and generous proposition. "I see the misery and degradation to which your child is born and am come to relieve, enrich, and elevate him. Now if you will engage, on his behalf, and lay upon him an oath, and sign and seal it, that he shall daily climb, barefooted, for five successive years, the steep ascent of a neighbouring mountain: I will bind myself, by a solemn vow, to receive him into my own family and adopt him as my own child." Would you, in such a case, begin to frame excuses, or to fabricate such objections as these,—Why truly, I should be glad for my child thus to be honoured and enriched, but really, it will not be in my power to make him com-

ply with the condition of your agreement. He may, at a riper age, entirely disapprove of them. He may, and probably will, be utterly averse to such exertion. He will naturally abhor and shrink from the labour. Not thus, would you argue!—but would most gladly accede to the proposal. And then, how would you proceed with that child, now become to you an object of deeper interest than ever? At the earliest dawn of reason, you would tell him of the great prince, and his noble offer, and of the terms, on which it was to be obtained. “I know, my child, it will be an arduous task; painful to accomplish! I know you are disposed to decline the offer upon terms so hard! But consider your condition,—a child of poverty and wretchedness; doomed to a life of misery, ignominy, and want;—if you consent to this proposal and fulfil the vow which I have laid upon you, by complying with the terms of the compact, you will then be elevated to comfort, plenty and honour! In a manner, somewhat like this, would you plead. But because you were unable to control the will and disposition of your child, and make him fulfil the engagement, you would not, therefore, refuse to bring him under its obligations. Now bring these same principles and feelings to bear upon the case in hand, and you will at once perceive, the invalidity of the objection we have been considering.

But perhaps the difficulty of securing on the part of your child, fulfilment of the vows of Baptism, assumes more the semblance of an impossibility, than

in the case we have just been supposing:—and possibly there may be a far greater difficulty;—but then, is there not a far greater good to be secured? We admit that your own unaided efforts, would be utterly insufficient to secure in your godchild, a confirmation of his sacramental vows;—that the assistance and the blessing of God's Holy Spirit are absolutely necessary,—but, does that fact render the objection more valid? Not at all:—for the Holy Spirit is ready and altogether willing, to render the needful co-operation: He never has refused, and he never will refuse that co-operation, when it is earnestly sought for. He will bless the means which you employ, and that blessing is as a lever placéd in your hand, giving you a power tenfold greater than that of your unaided strength, a power altogether effectual, in securing the desired end.

We are fully aware, that the Christian sponsor cannot do every thing, towards perfecting the work of religion, in the heart of his godchild;—but, because he cannot do all, shall he therefore engage to do nothing? Because his own unaided arm cannot compel the young disciple to perform the vows of Baptism, shall he therefore refuse the grace of God, which will give strength and efficacy to his own exertions?

If the sponsor be one of the parents of the child, the objection from his lips, is entirely void of force and validity;—for, he here pledges himself to do nothing more, than what every feeling of parental

love, and every motive of parental duty, calls upon him to do, whether he pledged himself or not. In either case, he is bound by most weighty and momentous considerations, to leave no means untried, at all calculated to bring his child to the abjuration of every thing sinful, and to faith in a crucified Redeemer. His sponsorial obligations only add other links, to the chain, which binds him for the discharge of these most sacred parental duties. The tacit pledge which he gives in Baptism, is additional and stronger security extended to the Church, for the performance of a previous duty.

But whether the sponsor be a parent or not, he undertakes the accomplishment of no impossibility, but simply to do all in his power, by religious instruction and training, by a good example and prayer, to induce the baptized to comply with the conditions of this holy covenant.

It has been urged by others, that every man ought to be permitted to choose for himself in reference to matters of religion, and therefore they will not, by forming any engagement for their children, deprive them of the liberty of choosing for themselves.

In answer to this, we observe, that in one sense, even after the vows of Baptism are laid upon them, it is perfectly optional with them, either to perform those vows or not ;—but remember, they must abide the consequences of their choice.

In doubtful matters, or in matters of mere opinion, the principle upon which your objection is based,

may possibly be correct;—but where the truth is incontrovertible; where the course to be pursued admits of no safe alternative; where momentous considerations are involved; the principle, so far from being correct, and harmless, is incorrect and decidedly pernicious. Were the religion of Jesus Christ of doubtful benefit;—were the fact of our depravity and enmity to God, enveloped in the least obscurity;—did the duties which we owe to our heavenly Father, rest upon a foundation, at all uncertain, then, might the principle be applied, without any impropriety, to the case in hand. But are the duties of the Gospel of questionable obligation; or the salvation of the Gospel of questionable importance?

Let your children choose for themselves! And is that choice of such little consequence? O, it is a heart blind to the truths of God's holy word; blind to the awful realities of the eternal world, and to the best interests of your children, which actuates you, in offering such an excuse for not laying upon them the vows of the Baptismal Sacrament.

You would not act thus, in reference to affairs of temporal concern. You would have no hesitation in imposing upon your children, by oath, the most onerous duties, in order to advance their worldly interests.

Let them choose for themselves! And suppose they should be at liberty to do so; what a strange heart, and what a perverted judgment must that parent have, who should reserve for his children this

ignoble privilege! Reserve for them the privilege of loving and practising sins against their Maker and their God! Reserve for them the privilege of blaspheming their heavenly Father's name, of violating His Sabbaths; of doing despite to His Law! Reserve for them the privilege of reviling the name of Jesus, and of counting the blood of his cross an unholy thing! If that be your determination, alas! for the choice which your children will make!

But perhaps this same excuse comes clothed in other words,—“I have no right to bind the conscience of my child, by laying any religious obligation upon him.” If so, then you intend to let him choose for himself, and thus become chargeable with that wretched mode of acting, which has just been exposed.

But, in answer to this it may further be observed, that the Christian parent may as rightfully obligate his child as the Jewish parent, under similar circumstances, and for a similar purpose; and we know that the latter did so, under the immediate sanction of the Almighty, and in obedience to His express command. “Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel—your *little ones*, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.” (Deut. xxix. 10, 12.) The Scripture warrant, then, places the

parent's right in this matter, beyond the reach of a denial.

The falsity of the objection may still further be made to appear from the fact, that the sacramental oath simply obligates the child for the performance of a previous duty. It is not the vow of Baptism which lays that duty upon him. Faith and obedience are incumbent, independently of this vow. How applicable are the words of a celebrated jurist here:—"Besides these express engagements," says he, speaking upon a subject, which may well serve as an illustration of that now before us, "the Law also holds that there is an implied, original and virtual *allegiance*, owing from every subject to his sovereign, antecedently to any express promise; and although the subject never swore any faith or allegiance in form."* The oath of Baptism is given for the same purpose, that the oath of allegiance is, "to remind the subject of this, his previous duty, and for the better securing its performance."† Under the firm conviction, then, that the act is approved by reason, and sanctioned by the word of God, you may take your child to the sacred font, and lay upon him there the holy vows of the Baptismal Covenant. Remember that, withholding your child from the sacrament, you tacitly refuse to acknowledge the debt due from him to Almighty God, and deny him to be under any obligation whatever to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to obey his gospel.

* Blackstone's Comment. B. I. Chap 10.

† Ibid.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUTIES OF SPONSORS : MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED : OBLIGATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

THE solemn obligations assumed by the sponsor in this interesting Sacrament have already been briefly shown to require at his hands the application of every means in his power, calculated to lead his godchild to faith in Christ. The importance of the subject demands more extended consideration. And here we beg that one fact be borne in mind, that sponsorial responsibilities press with equal force upon all who have assumed them.

The Christian friend and the parent here stand in the same relation to the child ; bound for the same duties, and impelled by the same considerations.

What then are the most important means, which the faithful sponsor is bound to employ ? The grand object to be accomplished is to induce the young baptized, at the proper age, to ratify and confirm his sacramental vows. Most true, it is, no human power can compel him ; no mortal energy can change the heart ; no alchemy of ours convert it into

a golden censer, to be waived before the altar of God, burning with the incense of faith and love. How, then, shall the sponsor act? What means do most surely promise an accomplishment of the desired end?"

The infant, at the earliest dawn of reason,—“so soon as he shall be able to learn,” must be made to know “what a solemn vow, promise and profession he hath made by you.” Of this time, you must, yourself be the judge,—but whenever it shall have arrived, then, your sponsorial obligations call you to the blessed work. No time, no labour, no exertion should be spared, to make the young disciple feel the responsibilities of his baptism, the solemn importance of his covenant-engagements, and the sacredness of the vow which binds him. They should be enforced, by all those touching considerations, to which the young heart is so keenly sensible. The motives which actuated you, to lay the vows of baptism upon him, should be clearly explained; the rich blessing to be secured, should be constantly presented, and the conditions of the covenant deeply engraved upon his memory. To the promise of God, he should be frequently directed, and the condescending love which moved Him to institute the sacrament, should be pictured in all its rich and overflowing fulness. The obligations growing out of his Baptism, should be pressed home upon the conscience, and his enviable distinctions, and invaluable privi-

leges, called in, to aid your exertions by their animating encouragements.*

Not only as baptismal duties, but as plain Gospel requirements, the conditions of the covenant should be urged upon him, and a refusal to fulfil them, should be shown to involve him, not only in the guilt of a broken vow, and of vile ingratitude, but in the misery of eternal ruin.

By argument and affectionate entreaty, the conscientious sponsor, will persuade his godchild to “renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh.” He will tell him how these things steal away the heart from God, and “war against the soul.” He will teach him to regard all earthly things, as valuable only so far as they enable him to glorify God, and to look upon every thing conflicting with this, as sinful and destructive. He will show him the reasonableness of renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil, with all their works and all their sinful suggestions; will teach him how hateful they are in the sight of God, and how tremendous are the woes, denounced against them.

With equal assiduity he will endeavour to impress his godchild with the necessity of believing in Christ, and the way in which that belief is to save him.

* The ground-work of such instruction may be found in that part of this little work addressed to the baptized.

Faith, in its nature ; in its workings on the heart ; in its effects upon the life, will be fully and forcibly explained. He will be taught to regard all the fancied purity of his heart as filthy rags, and all the best actions of his life as utterly defective in the sight of God, whilst, at the same time, the spotless robes of the Redeemer's righteousness will be shown to be altogether sufficient for his acceptance with God.

This faithful instruction must be enforced by the example of a holy life and conversation. Diligence, the most unwearied in imparting religious truths, and eloquence, the most persuasive, in enforcing them, will be altogether ineffectual, if there be ungodliness in your daily life.

To teach religion with your tongue, and irreligion by your life, is, with your left hand, attempting to unloose the fetters of sin, whilst, with your right, you are rivetting them upon his heart. Example is always more powerful than precept ; and the soundest logic, with the purest rhetoric, and the most importunate entreaties of a parent, will be as ineffectual as the sounding of brass, or the tinkling of a cymbal, so long as his child can look to a solitary instance, in which his example inculcated a different lesson. The heart is prone to sin, and eager to seize upon every little circumstance, by which to justify the evil it would pursue, and far more substantial and valid will that justification be deemed, if any such circumstance can be found in his parent's life or conversation.

If, then, your godchildren, be they your offspring or not, see that you do not renounce all that baptism forbids, and perform all that it enjoins, idle and vain will your instructions be! Your advice, your warnings, your tenderest appeals, will be more empty than "the babbling of men filled with new wine." If they see that you love the world; that you delight in its pleasures; that you truckle for its favour, that you admire its distinctions, and with ambitious ardour struggle for its gold; never, O never expect to make them disregard the distinction, the favour, the pleasures, nor the riches of the world!

If you adhere to practices, at variance with the purity of the Christian character, never cherish the hope that they will renounce them! Vain will be your endeavours to make them "believe all the articles of the Christian faith," if they perceive in yourself the slightest evidence of unbelief. Inseparable difficulties will oppose you, in attempting to make them feel their need of a Saviour, if they see that you reject him: to make them "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same," if you neither keep, nor walk in them yourself! Give your eloquent instructions to the winds, if they be not enforced by the more persuasive eloquence of your example.

To faithful instruction and the example of a holy life, the conscientious sponsor will add unwearied applications at a throne of grace. Prayer has been styled "the engine that moves the world," and in

the same way that it moves the world, will it affect the heart of a little child. It will wrest from the hand of God that resistless energy, which can alone convert, subdue and sanctify it.

It is not enough that the baptized should be remembered in your hours of daily devotion. There should be stated seasons, and special times, allotted to that one object. To plead with God for his mercy's sake ; for his covenant's sake, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, is the way to obtain the blessing which you crave ! Let the all-comprehensive and inimitable prayers of the Baptismal Service be the model, if not the very language itself of your supplications. O that every sponsor would imbibe the spirit of fervent prayer, which pervades every petition of that interesting service ! Of how many members of the Christian church might it then be said, " These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "

Here, then, we have the three great duties devolving upon every sponsor, nor can either of them be omitted without a most culpable unfaithfulness. But the conscientious godparent will not even here place the limit to his exertions. He will call in every other means which offers any promise of success. The company which the baptized one is permitted to keep ; the books which he is permitted to read ; the amusements, in which he is allowed to engage, will all be objects of his watchful care. Whatever tax the use of these means may impose

upon his time, his patience, or upon his inclinations, he will deem it far from commensurate with the importance of the end.

Many a Christian sponsor has thus succeeded in bringing his youthful charge to ratify his early vows in the sacred rite of Confirmation ; and thus, too, may we secure the same manly ratification in our children, and the fulfilment of the covenant-promise for them, "I will be their God:" "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

The duties to the baptized, which we have now been considering, do, with marked propriety, pertain to their sponsors. *They* are the peculiar guardians of the young members of Christ's family, and at their hands the church demands the most watchful supervision. But these duties are not to be exclusively confined to godparents. They devolve, to a much greater extent than is generally supposed, upon all the faithful people of God.

That ministers of the gospel are bound to extend peculiar care to the baptized will not be denied, especially when it is remembered that Christ, in his command to baptize, coupled with it the duty of teaching also ; an injunction, which evidently makes it incumbent upon all ministers, faithfully to instruct them in the nature and obligations of their baptism, and otherwise to further their spiritual interests.

But that all members of the Christian household have duties to perform, in relation to the baptized, appears to be entirely overlooked, and altogether disregarded.

When we here assert these duties, we are backed by strong authority. The testimony of one, the value of whose opinion cannot be called in question, is decided on this subject;—"That infants," says he, "should be baptized, and then be left by ministers and churches in a situation undistinguishable from that of other children, appears to me irreconcilable with any scriptural views of the nature and importance of this sacrament." In another place, he is more decided, and says of the baptized, that they "are *entitled*, in a peculiar manner, to the counsel, the reproof, the conversation, the example, and the prayers of Christians."*

Says another writer, touching the same subject, "The members of Christ's body—every member of the same, feels an interest in their welfare; God's Church and people, his ordinances and ministers, his word and Spirit, his providences and his blessed Son, are all engaged in winning them over to holiness, in educating them for eternal bliss." Elsewhere he speaks of God's "requiring his ministers and people to bring all the means of grace" to bear upon the spiritual welfare of His young disciples.

They are all members of the same family; and it

* Dwight. Theol. vol. IV. Sermon. clvi.

is but reasonable that the baptized should be objects of peculiar interest to all other members of the Christian household. They all belong to the same fold, and the wandering lamb must not stray, forgotten and unsought for. They are members of the same body, and if one of the members suffer, all the other members should sympathize with it, and seek its cure.

By the ancient Persians, whose light was dimness compared with ours, this principle of social sympathy was fully recognized, and the social duties arising therefrom were esteemed obligatory upon every member of the national family. By a law of the land, no Persian was allowed to pray, unless at the same time he interceded for his countrymen.* Might not the same recognizance of social love with far more propriety be expected of the family of Christ? Shall the deluded votaries of a pagan creed put to the blush the followers of the divine Redeemer?

In another point of view, these duties to the baptized appear to be incumbent upon all the disciples of Christ. It is an observation of the excellent Bishop Taylor, that we should "read our duty in our petitions, and do all that lieth in us for realizing the objects of our prayers."

Christians! your supplications have ascended to a Throne of Grace! You have implored Almighty

* Herodotus as quoted by Russel.
Anc. Euc. Let. X.

God to bestow the richest spiritual blessings upon most of the little children around you; have prayed that they might receive the fulness of his grace, and ever remain in the number of His faithful children. Was that the sincere desire of your heart? Then read your duty there, and “do all that lieth in you” to realize the object of that desire! How much “lieth in you,” must be left to the decision of your own judgment. Only be it remembered that, whilst Christian zeal must be tempered by Christian prudence, there is danger lest a fictitious prudence should hamper the efforts of your zeal; and whilst no sense of duty, must carry you beyond the limits of discretion, there is danger, lest a mistaken discretion should pervert your sense of duty. The observation is made with regard to “counsel,” “reproof” and “conversation.” There is little danger to be apprehended, from an excess of zeal, either in prayer, or in holiness of living, or in the powerful preaching of a good example.

From these considerations, we cannot but regard the duties which all Christians owe to the baptized, as far more sacred and obligatory than is generally supposed; nor can we believe it to be an unfounded assertion of Dr. Dwight, when he declares that, every baptized person is “required and that he is invested with a plain right to require others, to perform the several duties, incumbent on him and on them,”* as members of the family of Christ.

* Theol. Serm. clvi.

Should the Christian Church ever return to its primitive simplicity, and should an humble devotion to the Redeemer's cause ever again pervade the bosoms of his followers, the performance of these duties will be far more practicable than it is at present. It would be a sight affecting and beautiful, to see all on whom the Baptismal Seal has been placed, labouring and striving together for each other's welfare.

These are holy duties, such as angels delight to undertake ; duties enjoined by obligations of fraternal love, and such as shall hereafter receive a rich reward.

The true Christian who has walked about the walls of Zion, and who views in its proper light, the Baptismal Covenant ; who regards all within its pale as disciples of Christ, sons of God, and members of the same holy family, cannot but cherish a deep interest in his unconverted fellow-disciples. The Church of Christ and all, encircled by her maternal arms, are objects of his solicitude. By the actions of his life, he will prove the sincerity of his heart when he says,—

“If e'er to bless thy sons,
My voice or hands deny,
These hands, let useful skill forsake,
This voice, in silence die.

For her, my tears shall fall,
For her, my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
“Till toils and cares shall end.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF SPONSORS TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: TO ALMIGHTY GOD: THEIR PROFESSION.

IT is one peculiarity of the conscientious Christian, that he is ever anxious to learn his duty. He does not require that it should be proclaimed in a voice of thunder, nor written in characters of blazing light, ere he will consent to acknowledge it. No, he will search for it, "as for hid treasures,"—will attach full importance to every little consideration which enforces it, and will be actuated thereby, to a faithful discharge of it.

To such, we now more particularly address ourselves, conscious of being able to do little else than simply touch upon the obligations which demand a performance of the duties of the sponsorial office.

In the discharge of these duties, there are obstacles of no mean magnitude to be encountered:—and not among the least is that worldly spirit, which in its demands upon our time, our affections and our regard, directly conflicts with the requirements of the Baptismal Sacrament.

The earthly interests of their children, appear

to be objects of absorbing solicitude, with some parents:—their temporal well-being, the grand centre of all their hopes and their desires. To place their children, even though they be members of the Christian family, in distinguished stations; to acquire for them the paltry reputation of being rich and fashionable; to elevate them to a level with the great, and give them a name that shall be known among men, are thoughts and vain-glorious aspirations, which fill the mind, to the entire exclusion of every sense of their sponsorial obligations.

When consulting with respect to the dress, company, reading or education of their children, the question is not,—how will it comport with the Christian character? What influence will it probably exert upon the heart? Can I do this for them consistently with my sponsorial obligations? Shall I, in allowing this, or in recommending it to my children, give my sanction to any thing, forbidden by their sacramental vows? No. The question is rather,—How will this prepare them to shine in the world? Will it meet the approbation of those, with whom I desire them to associate? Will it promote their temporal interests? Thus prone and prompt are they to adopt the course which a worldly spirit designates, although their sponsorial obligations should bespeak for it, their decided condemnation.

Another impediment, so frequently met, that we cannot forbear an allusion to it, is in the ungodliness of the father. How must that melancholy fact

enhance the difficulties, with which the Christian mother has to contend! When she would restrain the feet of her baptized one, from places of injurious pleasure, or of contaminating associations, she finds here, a conflicting power drawing him into the dreaded vortex. When she persuades him to believe in Christ, and obey his Gospel, alas! she is unable to point to his honoured father's example, for an enforcing argument. Thus, whilst the Christian mother, true to her high trust, teaches one thing, the ungodly father, by his life and conversation, teaches another. The teaching of the one, accompanied by prayers, and tears, and warm expostulation, is rendered comparatively powerless, by that other teaching, which operates with noiseless, but unfailing force.

How important is it, in view of the obstacles and discouragements with which the sponsor has to contend, that every motive which may animate him to his duty, should be brought to bear upon his heart and conscience! How important, not only as it regards himself, but the baptized also, and the Christian Church? To the faithful discharge of these duties, he is bound by considerations, equally interesting and sacred, equally momentous and affecting.

The Church of Christ has a plain right to demand this at your hands. And she does demand it. "Forasmuch," says that beautiful charge, delivered at the conclusion of the Baptismal Service, "as this child hath promised by you," &c. Seeing you have

laid these vows upon him, it becomes "your part and duty to see that this infant be taught," &c. The Church requires of you to be faithful to these dear young persons, on the very ground that you have brought them to holy Baptism. Earnestly desiring, moreover, the glory of her great Head, and jealous for the honour of the Christian name, she expects to see all her members following in the footsteps of the holy Saviour, and bearing such a resemblance to him, as shall indicate the family to which they belong. Every effort to have that resemblance perfected in spirit, in life, and in conversation, does she demand of every parent and of every sponsor. She requires for her own sake, for her own honour, and as a duty due to herself, that you teach the young baptized what are his peculiar privileges and distinctions, and what singular loveliness of character, and correctness of deportment, and holiness of life, may justly be expected of him.

Were you to adopt into your own family the child of a beggar, there would be no doubt respecting the mode of treatment to be pursued. For the reputation and character of your household, you would endeavour to instil your own principles into him, and to implant in his bosom high and honourable sentiments. You would strive to eradicate every sordid feeling, and would labour to remove all his vulgar tastes, habits and propensities, and to correct every thing ungainly and awkward in gait, manner, and address. And what persuasions would you

employ? You would tell him that his rank in life is elevated, that he is now to move in a different sphere, and be introduced into the society of other, and more polished associates. You would tell him how unseemly, his accustomed garments would now appear, and you would impress upon him the importance of cultivating a refinement of manner, conversation, and feeling, befitting his station. All this, you would do for one whom you had introduced into your own family, and shall you do less for one, whom you have introduced into the family of Christ? Does not the Church with reason, require that you should do as much? And in regard also, of your duties as a parent, she may rightfully demand at your hands a full discharge of them. So long as your child was without her pale, the Church had no right to require this; but now that you have brought him into the Church, she asks, authoritatively, at your hands, a faithful performance of your parental duties. To the Church, you stand pledged, for the religious education of the young disciple. Were this a bond or an obligation, betwixt yourself and your fellow man, you would not dare to trifle with it, as you do.

Solemnly as you are bound to the Christian Church, for the performance of your sponsorial duties, to Almighty God, you are bound by considerations equally momentous.

Every feeling of holy awe with which you contemplate His character;—your sacred veneration for the name of each person of the Trinity;—the hon-

our and reverence to which His holy Sacrament is entitled, all call upon you for a faithful discharge of these duties. By neglecting them, you throw a slight upon the Baptismal Covenant; you undervalue the rich blessing extended to your children; you view, as of insignificant importance, the oath of Almighty God, by which that blessing is secured, and above all, you evince a disposition towards the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, which mocks the majesty of Heaven, and throws such despite upon each person of the adorable Trinity, as leaves the soul involved in guilt of a crimson dye.

We believe it to be a truth, needing no demonstration, that the more profound the veneration entertained for the Three persons of the Godhead, the more will Baptism administered in each hallowed name, be appreciated, and more faithful the discharge of duties which such baptism imposes.

Consider, moreover, the claim which the Almighty has upon your child! You have dedicated him to the Lord;—have consecrated him to the service of the Trinity; surrendered him, with your own hands and by your own act, to the Lord Jesus Christ,—not, indeed, to him, in person, but to his minister, his ambassador, his legal and acknowledged representative. Shrink not from the avowal of what that solemn deed imports! If he belong to God, the world, and Satan, the prince of this world, have no claim upon his service. Let them know that in your child, in your baptized one, they must not hope to

find a worshipper, nor a servant. Can you, consistently with this dedication of your child to God, teach him to live for himself alone ; to hug his silver and his gold to his own bosom ; to toil and struggle with an eye single to his own promotion, or to his own aggrandizement ? Should it not be your first question, when reflecting upon his education, and his future calling in life,—“ Will this be the best thing I can do for him, as a servant and soldier of Jesus Christ ? ” Remember, that, as you have dedicated your child to God, you are in duty bound to do whatever you can, to make that dedication good :—and God, himself, demands it at your hands.

The force of your sponsorial obligations is greatly augmented by your baptismal profession.

By this consideration, the Church exhorts you to be faithful :—“ *remembering, always* that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession.” Was that profession avowedly your own ? Did you in heart believe, and in sincerity acknowledge, as you stood beside the holy font, the sinfulness of your child by nature, and its need of the renovating grace of the Holy Spirit ? Was the avowal made in good faith, when you assented to the obligation resting upon him, “ to follow the example of our Saviour Christ ; ” to “ die to sin and rise again to righteousness ; ” to mortify continually “ all his evil and corrupt affections and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living ? ”

Or was this, the profession of the Baptismal Sacrament, falsely made in the presence of Almighty

God? Did you stand before Him on that solemn occasion, in an hypocritical disguise, acknowledging what you did not feel, and professing what you did not believe?

I anticipate your answer. You indignantly throw back the imputation of a sin, as ignoble in the eyes of men, as it is hateful in the sight of God. Then we ask if that profession do not impose upon you the sacred obligations of doing all, that mortal energy and perseverance can accomplish, to induce your godchild to live as becomes it? O, if you believe, as you have professed to do, that his eternal salvation depends upon it, how can you justify yourself, in the neglect of any means calculated to effect that end? Admitting,—as you have solemnly and publicly done,—his guilt and his misery, harder than adamant must your heart be, if indifferent to his rescue. But so to educate and train him up in unchristian practices, as to keep him *alive in sin and dead to righteousness*; to pamper his “evil and corrupt affection,” by vain and sinful indulgence; to hinder him from *proceeding* “*daily in all virtue and godliness of living*;”—O, this is giving your baptismal profession to the winds, and worse than plunging a poignard into his bosom.

Would you be true to that profession, and act a consistent part? Then teach your godchild, “what a solemn vow, promise and profession he hath here made by you,” and see that he be virtuously brought up “to lead a godly and a Christian life.” Thus alone, can you prove your sincerity,

CHAPTER IX.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF SPONSORS TO THEIR GODCHILDREN.

NOT the least interesting of the obligations which enforce the duties of your sponsorial office are those derived from your peculiar relationship to the young member of the Church. As his surety, pledged for his ratification of his sacramental vow, you are released, it is true, so soon as he shall "*come of age to take it upon himself*;" but then there are other claims, which he has upon you—claims unimpaired by ripening years. So fully does the Church confide in the efficacy of early religious training; so powerful does she deem the influences which may be brought to bear upon the young and tender heart, that she demands, and with reason too, a pledge of the sponsor, that his godchild *shall*, at the proper age, ratify and confirm the promise of his baptism. The fault is the sponsor's, should the child refuse to do so; if not the case is a singular one. Then, we ask, if it be not a shameful trifling with the pledge, the voluntary pledge of your suretiship, to neglect any means for bringing your godchild to that happy resolve? Standing chargeable with any

such neglect, a large share of the responsibility, should the baptismal vow be unconfirmed, must rest upon yourself; but, exculpated from that charge, your responsibility ceases, when the child shall come of age to take it upon himself.

This is a personal consideration, one which intimately and seriously concerns yourself; but there are others which concern your godchild, not to be overlooked.

You have brought him into an engagement, which must obligate him, to become an avowed follower of Christ, so soon as he shall arrive at years of discretion. By performing your sponsorial duties you may remove some of the greatest obstacles in his way; may win him over to the admiration of religion; may enlighten his mind with rays of gospel truth, and bend his young heart in the proper direction.

You bore him in your arms to the sacred font, there to be made a Christian, and "a child of God;" and in so doing, signified not only your desire, but your determination, that he should so far as your influence, by the grace of the Holy Spirit could avail, do all that a Christian ought to do, and be all that a Christian and a child of God ought to be.

You have greatly increased the responsibilities of this child. In the same proportion should your diligence and your exertions, in promoting his spiritual welfare, be increased.

You have laid upon him, in the most solemn manner, the most holy vows:—and this thing was not

done in a corner. O, then, if your own act and deed have so greatly enhanced his obligations to lead a holy life, is it not your bounden duty to see, that all needful instruction be imparted; that every thing, tending to check the growth of sin in his heart, be brought to bear upon the conscience, and that every thing, favourable to the culture of true religion in the breast, be brought to exert its influence upon him? Think you, the Church of Christ like her great Head, ever tender towards little children, would have permitted you to bring that child under such a solemn promise, if she had not supposed that you would have done your duty?

The Church of Christ,—the witnesses,—the minister who performed the ordinance, and each person of the Holy Trinity, must all appear against you, if unfaithful, charging you with most cruel neglect.

Will you then be unfaithful? O can you longer trifle with the soul entrusted to your care? Alas! for that child, that he ever fell into the hands of such a sponsor! Alas! that he was ever borne in your arms to the sacred font! The very first time that he crossed the threshold of the house of God, and was seen in his holy temple, was, when you, his parent, or his friend, solemnly professed, what you did not believe; solemnly undertook, what you never intended to perform! What can be expected of such a child; what, when mockery of Heaven, and contempt thrown upon this holy Sacrament, attends his first introduction in the house of God, and into the

Church of Christ; what, but that he should "*lead the rest of his life according to this beginning?*"

O, then, ye tender parents! what exertions will you spare! what means will you leave untried, at all calculated, to secure the ratification of the baptismal vow by your children? God will not, no, He cannot perform his part of the engagement, unless your children perform theirs, and how much does that depend upon yourselves! Neither His faithfulness, nor His truth; neither His justice, nor His mercy; neither the honour of His government, nor the Compact itself, calls upon Him to become their Saviour, and their God, unless they confirm the vow, given in their name at their baptism. How much does it depend upon yourself, whether they confirm it or not!

The heart of that child must be awfully depraved, which could resist the mild, but powerful coercion of tender instruction, affectionate entreaty, and parental example, and all assisted by the grace of God, imparted in answer to fervent prayer. Has your child attained to man's estate, and refused to ratify his sacramental vows? Pause, ere you attach to him the blame! A little reflection may peradventure, fix the conviction upon your mind, that much of the blame is to be laid at your own door; that your lamentations over his ungodliness, ought rather to be converted into tears for your own neglect. Have you employed all the means, of which we have spoken, to impress upon his young mind a deep and

realizing sense of his baptismal responsibilities? Have you made him to feel the deep solemnity of his vow, and the necessity of confirming it? Have you carefully warded off every thing, prejudicial to the attainment of that end?

You promised, on his behalf, that he should “renounce the devil and all his works.” O, then, have you shielded him from the pollution of wicked associates, and from the foul contagion, which breathes around him in the world?

You vowed in his name, that he should renounce “the sinful lusts of the flesh; the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same.” Have you, then, done every thing to secure that renunciation? Have you, by every expedient, which you could devise, endeavoured to check the growth of pride; to smother the risings of vain-glory, and extinguish the desire for human admiration? Have you restrained his feet from scenes of dissipating mirth, and of pernicious pleasure? Have you discouraged all parade and show, in dress and manner? Have you striven to subdue those hankerings after earthly riches, which like a canker, corrode the nobler passions of the soul, and poison the mind against all holy things?

What, O what becomes of your sponsorial obligations, when you decorate the bodies of your children, with those vanities, which you bound them to renounce? What, when you teach these young members of the Christian family, to value and labour for

gold or for renown?—What, when you lead them to those places of amusement, where the glare, and glitter, and the idle whirl, drive all serious thoughts from the bosom, never again, perhaps, to resume their station there? O believe it, this is not the way to enkindle in the young heart, that spirit of self-renunciation and devoted zeal, which ought to distinguish every baptized disciple of the crucified Redeemer! This is not the way to lead him to the cross! Neither the fashions of the world, nor its gold, nor its distinctions will accelerate his progress to the hill of Calvary! Never can he, in this way, “be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life!”

And, what has become of your baptismal prayers? Shocking reflection! if they have ascended to heaven, only to be recorded as a testimony against you!

When you called down the Holy Spirit, did you in reality desire that He should come? When you prayed, “that all sinful affections might die in your baptized one, and that all things belonging to the Spirit might live and grow in him,” was that the fervent wish of your bosom? When you prayed that he “might have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh,” O, did that supplication go from a heart, ardently craving the boon it asked? Then solve the enigma of your strange acting with that child! Have your instructions and your warnings; the liberties which you have allowed, and the restraints, which you have laid upon him, all proved the since-

city of your prayers? Nay, does not your whole conduct, in relation to that child, rather convict you of a shameful duplicity, on that solemn occasion when you presented him for holy Baptism? Deal candidly with yourself! Send home the question to your conscience. What am I doing with this child whom I have consecrated to God? And what are you doing? Training him up for the world, or for the Church; for a boon companion of the frivolous and the dissipated, or for a meet associate of the people of God; for a slave of Mammon, or for a servant of the great King; for an ally of Satan, or for a soldier of the cross? O, is it your desire to see him shining in the circles of the gay, rather than an humble follower of the meek and lowly Jesus; adorned with the tinsel decorations of vanity and folly, rather than by the lovely simplicity of the Christian faith; a votary of fashion, pleasure, and the world, rather than a true defender of the Redeemer's cause? If it be, proclaim that desire to the world! Be consistent! Return to the sacred altar! Cancel the obligations which you there assumed! Retract the solemn profession which you there avowed! Demand of Almighty God the child there dedicated to Him! Obliterate the insignia of his Church-membership! and consecrate him by some other ceremonial to the worship and service of the world, the flesh and the devil!

O, if you shrink from the performance of your sponsorial duties; if you tend not, with protecting care, and the proper culture, this delicate plant of

the Saviour's vineyard, it argues, that you little appreciate the promise of having the Lord for our God; or else, that you little credit the truth of His word; that you have little faith in the virtue of parental influence; or, that you affix little value to the soul of your child. As you would avoid the inference, deeply engrave upon his young heart the "solemn vow, promise and profession, he hath made by you." Impress upon him the nature of that profession, and the solemn import of that vow! You will find it a most potent argument, urging him, with an almost resistless power, publicly to avow the one, and ratify the other! By the sacredness of the oath call upon him; by the faithfulness of the great Jehovah encourage him; by his dedication to Christ, persuade him; by his high profession, entreat him; by his distinctive privileges, and the richness of the covenant-promise, animate him to fulfil and openly to ratify, and confirm his baptismal obligations!

I do not lightly esteem the difficulties of your undertaking. It is no easy task to divert the impetuous flow of evil passions, and unholy desires, and depraved inclinations into a channel so directly opposite to that which they now occupy. Arduous is the work before you, but mighty is the arm, pledged for your assistance! Enter upon that work and prosecute it; begin, continue and end it, "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;" encouraged by the animating reflection that,

"Who in the strength of Jesus trusts,
Is more than conqueror."

CHAPTER X.

ENCOURAGEMENTS OF SPONSORS IN BAPTISM.

IN this noble, but arduous undertaking, there are the sweetest and richest encouragements. Success does not here rest upon a bare peradventure. The unbelieving bosom, alone, would dare to anticipate a failure. The young heart is soft and tender, and incalculable is the power which parental influence may exert upon it. This were, indeed, of itself, wholly inadequate to the accomplishment of such a mighty change in its passions, motives, and inclinations, but powerfully, nevertheless, may it affect them. If we trace our noblest river to its rise, in all probability, we shall find that a little hillock determines its direction, diverts its course, prevents it from flowing through other regions, and turns it into the channel which it now occupies. And yet, it would scarcely be credited by one, who was gazing upon its deep, broad waters, rolling on in their majestic progress to the ocean, that a little hillock, not higher, perhaps, than his own arm could reach, has made it to sweep along in that direction, instead of the one, diametrically opposite. So in like manner,

in the moral world, are the most important results frequently obtained by the most apparently inadequate means.

But why need I dwell upon the motives of encouragement, to be drawn from this consideration? The faithfulness of God is your strongest ground of confidence; the source of your sweetest and most lively encouragement. The faithfulness of God, declared in the Sacred Volume, and attested by many interesting facts, affords abundant reason for anticipating the richest success.

Is it urged, in opposition to all this, that many very pious parents, have ungodly children? Let it be remembered that those parents may have been, and in all probability, were, negligent of their duty to their children. Though sincerely pious, they may have been ignorant of their sponsorial responsibilities and of the obligations, also, imposed by their parental relationship. Both Eli and David were holy men in the sight of God, but egregiously failed in the discharge of their parental duties. The unhappy end of their children affords a melancholy proof that the best of men are not always the best of parents.

Let every Christian sponsor who should be called to lament the irreligion of a beloved child, revert to the course, which he has, himself, pursued: and see if his failure, be not attributable to some *neglect*, on his own part. If not, peradventure, he may trace it to his own unbelief. Has he had entire confidence in the faithfulness of God? Has he relied, with

unwavering assurance, upon the promise of God? Has he laboured in this arduous work, with an humble dependance upon the grace of God? Or has he not been somewhat apprehensive, lest his heavenly Father should not deign to regard him, nor crown his efforts with success?

The very reason why the Almighty has not poured out His Holy Spirit more abundantly upon yourself, and His converting grace more abundantly upon your children may possibly be found in the same cause, to which the Evangelist ascribes the refusal of Christ, to manifest his power among the people of Nazareth,—“*He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*”

But, whether or not, the anxious parent can discover the cause of his failure, in himself, let him not attribute it to any unwillingness on the part of the Almighty to bless his exertions. If he have used every means in his power, and if conscience have no neglect with which to upbraid him, let him still rely upon the promise of God. His children may yet ratify their baptismal vows, and become devoted soldiers of the Cross. The Almighty, to prove his faith; to test his sincerity; to try whether he were in good earnest, in endeavouring to lead the young disciple in the way of holiness, may withhold His blessing, perhaps for years. Boyhood, and youth, and early manhood may roll over his child, ere he ratify his baptismal vows. But let him not despair. No time can impair the validity of the sacred ordi-

nance. The seal is on the brow of the baptized one: the conditions are binding upon his conscience, and the rich blessing of the compact is still extended. A parent's kind instructions, tender admonitions, and Christian example are not soon obliterated from the memory of his child, nor are a parent's supplications ever forgotten in heaven. Years may wing their flight away, ere the blessed fruit appear. The ground which he has cultivated, with such untiring industry, may long withhold the promise of its harvest. The seed sown, like the grain of the husbandman, when buried in the earth, may be lost to his recollection. But in God's own time, the showers of His grace shall descend upon "the children of the covenant," and they shall be "*as willows by the water courses,*" and "*all that see them, shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.*"

Another encouragement, pertaining exclusively to the parents and sponsors of the baptized, may be derived from the fact, that each person of the Godhead is peculiarly interested in the work, for which they have pledged themselves. I believe that, if at any time, in any work, any creature becomes, in a peculiar sense, a co-worker with God, it is the Christian sponsor, when striving to impress the baptized, with a sense of his sacramental obligations.

O, are not these, animating reflections?

Go on, then, Christian sponsor! encouraged by the delightful thought! The God of the Covenant, thus

in an especial manner, interested in your baptized one, will regard your work, with the smiles of his peculiar favour. The Lord Jesus Christ will not permit the honour put upon His own institution, to be unrewarded. The heavy responsibilities, which you were then to assume, did not deter you from bringing your child to His holy Baptism, and He will bless you, by blessing him. And the Holy Spirit, also, seeing that you confide in the hope of receiving His gracious assistance, will not disappoint you; and in reward for the honour, then put upon His name, will be the more ready and willing to aid you in meeting your obligations and in bringing your child to the cross of Christ.

If another incentive be needed, think of the ineffable delight, with which you would regard your child, should you become the instrument of his conversion! What joy, what rapture, must fill the bosom of that parent, who is the means of introducing into that fairer world on high, the immortal being, which he introduced into this world of sin and sorrow!—who becomes the instrument of conducting into the Church in heaven, the young disciple whom he brought into the Church on earth! And O, with what feelings of more than filial love must such a child, hang upon the bosom of such a parent! What a torrent of gratitude must gush from his soul, when first he places his foot upon the soil of the heavenly Canaan! But O, if that soul should be lost—if it should be lost, think you, amid its

tossings and its heavings in the lake of fire, it would not remember you!—that its shrieks of agony would not be mingled with upbraiding cries, against your cruel neglect of his spiritual welfare! Better far to be buried in utter oblivion, than remembered with such bitter execrations!

O ye guardians of the baptized!—how can you be unfaithful? With such solemn obligations pressing upon you, how can you be idle? With such animating encouragements, why should your heart grow faint? Compelled by the former; persuaded by the latter;—driven by one; drawn by the other; how can you be false to your sponsorial duties? Your very encouragements, themselves, impose a peculiar obligation upon you to be faithful. The strong assurances of success extended; the inviolable promise of the great Jehovah given; the best of all security granted you, will only serve to aggravate the guilt of your unfaithfulness!

Does a review of what you have done, convict you of a lamentable neglect of your sponsorial duties?—Does conscience condemn? O, then, let sorrow for the past, make you faithful for the future!—faithful to your God; faithful to your obligations; faithful to the souls of your godchildren! Were they born slaves to a hateful and cruel master, how would you urge them to comply with the terms of an engagement, which was to secure their freedom! Here, then, is an engagement to deliver them from the yoke of an eternal bondage, the bondage of the soul;

Satan and sin, the austere masters; nor only so, but to confer upon them, “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

You have done much by bringing them to this holy Sacrament. Great is *their* privilege, and lively should be *your* hope! But, remember, that whilst the baptism of water may introduce them into the Church on earth; the baptism of the Holy Ghost, can alone introduce them into the Church above. One, may make them members of the family of Christ; but the other, alone, can impress upon the soul the image of the great Head. One, may give them a title to the promise of the covenant, and all therein embraced, but the other is necessary ere that title can be made good. One, may make them “Sons of God,” but, it is only by the other, that they can receive “the Spirit of adoption.” One, may enlist them in the army of the Lord; but the other can alone infuse the fortitude and valour of the Christian soldier. Your supplications at a throne of grace, may obtain that most needful baptism for them.—Cease not, until it be granted! Temporal blessings are sometimes implored, when we are better without them, and God, in wisdom and mercy denies the prayer. But not so with the blessings of heavenly grace. “The promise” of these “is unto you and your children.” You remember the argument of Christ in reference to this very gift. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?—or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish,

give him a serpent?—or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” “If then, ye, being evil,” fallen, corrupt, depraved creatures, “know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father,” ever tender, ever considerate, ever kind, “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Importunate prayer for God’s converting grace will, sooner or later, be answered. Remember the woman of Canaan! As it was with her, so may it be with you! Earnestly did she cry,—“Have mercy on me, O Lord!—thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil!” But, no,—there must be a trial of her faith. “*He answered her not a word.*” But she persisted, nothing discouraged by the apparent neglect,—“Lord, help me!” And her importunity prevailed. The same trial, under circumstances, strongly analagous, may be necessary for yourself. The blessings which you crave, for the baptized, may be long withheld! Be not, then, discouraged, though God should answer you “*not a word:*”—but bear these dear young persons, on the arms of unwavering faith and prayer, before a throne of grace, and He who heard that anxious mother’s cry, will hear yours also!

For the following quotation from an eminent Bishop of our church, with which I conclude this appeal, I must bespeak your serious consideration. By its high authority, it may lend some additional importance to the views, which we have taken of your

sponsorial obligations. "If," says he, "instead of the too common way of expecting nothing, to the exercise of faith and prayer, on the part of the sponsors and the congregation, but the mere outward translation of the baptized into membership with the Church, and a covenant-relation to its Head, it were more common to seek for our children, the sanctification of the Spirit, in their presentation to Christ; did we take more pains with our own hearts, that we might offer our children with strong faith and fervent prayer, and, as they are growing in years, did we more faithfully and tenderly deal with them, when teaching or admonishing, or praying for them, as positively consecrated to God, and separated by an unchangeable line from the world; did we plant our efforts more upon their baptismal vows, take the text of their instruction more from their baptismal covenant, and pray more for them, with that in our view; the spectacle would be more common of little children manifesting that they have been with Jesus; evincing hopeful signs of having received 'the spirit of adoption;' so that the separation would not seem so wide and necessary, between 'the laver of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.'"

Be impelled, then, Christian sponsors!—and encouraged to a conscientious discharge of your sacred obligations! With an humble reliance upon Almighty aid, perform your duty to the young disciples of the Church, and God will be faithful to His word, Your heart will be cheered, and your eye delighted

with the gladdening spectacle of their open, manly and noble ratification of their baptismal vows:—and God Himself will become their portion in time and for eternity; their Saviour and Deliverer, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. He does not promise, in this holy covenant, to add acres to their possessions; to lift them to the pinnacle of earthly distinction; nor to feed those covetous and sinful desires, which you bound them to renounce. His promise is for eternity. His vow is for the immortal soul, for that which cannot die, for that which may be happy or miserable forever! O, as you value that covenant-blessing, and covet it for these dear young persons, be faithful!—be faithful! And God grant, for yourselves and for them, the prayer which your own lips have already uttered, that “being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, you may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally, you may come to the land of everlasting life!”

CHAPTER XI.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE BAPTIZED.

RELATION TO THEIR SPONSORS : CHURCH MEMBERSHIP :
THEIR CHRISTIAN NAME : THE SIGN OF DISTINCTION :
THEIR BAPTISMAL PROFESSION : THEIR DEDICATION TO
GOD.

Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe
and do, as they have promised for thee ?

Ans. Yes, verily.

That was an hour of solemn and sublime interest,
in the lives of the baptized, when they were brought
into covenant with the Most High God : and a
transaction secondary only to that, is their ratifica-
tion of the vows then made in their name, in the sa-
cred rite of Confirmation.

Seldom are we permitted to witness a more thrill-
ing and affecting spectacle than this ! There is
every thing in the act, to elicit the warmest admi-
ration, and to excite the deepest interest ; there is
more in it than the pen of the poet can describe, or
the pencil of the artist pourtray.

The admirable service appointed by the Church for the occasion; the officer who performs it; the chief Shepherd of the flock; the candidates for confirmation, gathered around him, there to perform the most important act of their whole lives, all combine to impart the most touching interest to that affecting solemnity. And then to know that these young candidates are tearing themselves away from powerful allurements, from the brilliant circles of the gay, and the fascinations of the world; that they are forfeiting, possibly, some important interest in earth's valued things, incurring, it may be, the displeasure of dear friends or relatives; subjecting themselves, in all probability, to scoffs, or sneers, or frowns; all this that they may take their stand beside the holy Saviour, and in the presence of the great congregation, and in the face of the whole world, and in the sight of God, avow the profession and ratify the vows of their baptism. O, how does this stir up the deepest and the noblest feelings of the breast!

Much more frequently would that lovely sight be witnessed, were their sacramental obligations duly felt and realized by the baptized! It is my earnest desire, as it shall be my strenuous endeavour, to make you feel and realize them. In early childhood you were taught to acknowledge them:—*“Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and do as they promised for thee?”* *“Yes, verily,”* you were made to reply, *“and by God’s*

help, so I will."* To several considerations, which impose this bounden duty, we now call your attention. We could scarcely be occupied with a lovelier theme, or engaged in a more delightful task.

If you have any tenderness of heart; any manliness of spirit; any nobleness of soul: if you have any feelings of filial love; and any reverential awe for the adorable Godhead: if you have a conscience not petrified, and a judgment not blinded by sin, to these I address myself. But if, on the contrary, there be any sordid feeling in your heart; any ignobleness of soul; any want of affectionate regard for your parents or sponsors: if there be any unbelief, or any want of reverence for the Almighty Jehovah: if there be in your breast a blunted conscience, a perverted judgment, or a heart that reckns no consequences, alas! I fear they will stand centinel at the portals of your bosom, and obstruct the entrance of truths, for which I crave admittance there.

I shall not occupy your time, nor your attention, by an exposition of Gospel truth. It is not my design to lay down before you the plan of salvation, nor to treat of the nature of Repentance, Faith and Obedience, the three conditions of the Covenant. The frequent instructions of the pulpit, and the many excellent written treatises upon these points, render it unnecessary.

There are two points which it shall be my humble endeavour to establish; first, that it is your DUTY

* Church Catechism.

“to believe and do as they promised for you:”—secondly, that it is your INTEREST to do so.

The sum and substance of what they promised for you is, that you should renounce all that God forbids; believe all that He reveals; and strive to practice all that He commands.

With the hope that your mind may be divested of every thing, prejudicial to the acknowledgment of your baptismal duties, I affectionately and earnestly solicit your attentive regard, for the considerations which go to establish and enforce them.

We are compelled to resort to no abstruse reasoning; to no elaborate argumentation. The point to which your attention is called is involved in no obscurity, but may be made to appear sufficiently plain to the most narrow comprehension.

There is a relationship, peculiar in its nature, subsisting betwixt yourself, and your parents and sponsors. It is a relationship which commenced at the time, and originated in the act, of their presentation of you at the sacred font for holy baptism. From it we deduce one of the many obligations, which should constrain you “to believe and do as they promised for you.” Every feeling of filial reverence and love demands it at your hands. By the most touching considerations, which can be presented to a young and tender heart, you are bound to honour the sacred oath which they laid upon you, and to act in accordance with the solemn profession which they then avowed. By making this vow and

profession in your name, they acknowledged that it was your duty, and your interest to confirm the one and live consistently with the other. That was a calm and deliberate, though silent expression of their firm belief. And is their opinion, so decidedly avowed; and is that act of theirs, so solemnly performed, of no consequence in your estimation? By refusing "to believe and do as they promised for you," you deny the obligation esteemed by them so sacred; and by denying the obligation, you charge them with *folly*, in entertaining such an opinion; and with *injustice*, in laying the vow upon you.

The hour in which they presented you for Baptism was one of serious consequence to themselves. And whose welfare did they seek by that holy deed? Their own? They had nothing to gain. It was solely your own individual, and eternal good; for, the same act which was designed to secure an everlasting portion in heaven for you, laid upon themselves most serious and weighty responsibilities.

Shall those tender parents, or those kind and considerate friends who thus endeavoured to advance your best interests, have the sorrow to think that all was done in vain? Shall their hearts be tortured by the reflection that the child of their love; of their anxieties; and of their prayers, is guilty of mockery of God; of contempt for one of His holy sacraments; of unfaithfulness to the vow of a covenant engagement, and of indifference to the proffered favour of heaven?

They are your sureties. They stand pledged to Almighty God, and pledged to His Church, for the faithful performance by you of your Christian duties. By every sense of justice, as well as by every feeling of love, you are bound to release them from the responsibilities of their suretiship; to release them by assuming the debt yourself, in the sacred rite of Confirmation.

But there are other considerations, of weighty importance, which enforce these obligations of the Baptismal Sacrament, and leave him who refuses to comply, stript of every excuse, and destitute of every palliation.

The Christian Church calls upon you, authoritatively, to believe and do, as the vows of the covenant require. Through that covenant, you became a member of the Church. Whatever slight, or whatever contemptuous disregard is thrown upon the one, falls equally upon the other also. If, by refusing to confirm its vows, you dishonour the Covenant; at the same time, and by the same sinful neglect, you dishonour the Christian Church.

Her members, her ministers, her bishops, and her great Head, all hold you accountable for this. This insulting indifference, I can use no milder term, touches, and is felt sensibly, through every nerve of every member of the body of Christ. It is only, by a faithful discharge of your baptismal obligations, that you can wipe away the reproach, which your neglect has thrown upon the Church of God: thus

alone, can you honour her, as she deserves to be honoured.

The Church may reasonably cherish the hope, as she does most truly and earnestly, the desire of seeing all within her pale staunch and avowed advocates of her faith and her worship. She denied you not, though a weak and helpless infant, the privileges, nor the distinctions conferred upon her by Christ, her Head. She has therefore a right, now that you are of a riper age, to expect some return for the tender regard, care and culture extended to you in the days of your infancy. O shall the child forget the mother, in whose bosom it was so carefully, so tenderly nursed and nurtured? The Church has a claim upon you; a claim which entitles her to your love, and to your service; which justifies her in requiring that you should renounce all that a Christian ought to renounce; believe all that a Christian ought to believe; and do all that a Christian ought to do; a claim sanctioned by the calm and deliberate act of the authors of your existence, and the guardians of your infancy.

The child of Jewish parents, introduced by circumcision into the Jewish Church, regarded his time, his talents, his property, as rightfully her own; pledged to advance her interests and promote her glory. To her requests he gave his first attention. With her requirements, he permitted nothing to interfere. Did she ask the time, usually allotted to his daily avocation? He freely gave it! Did she

call him away from the pursuit of earthly things, to give attendance upon her holy ordinances? He gladly came! Did she ask the first fruits of his vineyard, and the choicest of his flock? The demand was answered by abundant offerings of corn, and wine, and oil; his stalls gave up their fatlings; his herds surrendered the most unblemished of his oxen; his fold, the sheep of greatest beauty and value. And shall you, a member of the same Church, though under a better, and a happier dispensation,—shall you, exalted by higher distinctions; in the enjoyment of more enviable privileges, do less than he? Are there not other, and more restraining motives, urging you to defend the honour, to pray for the peace, and to seek the prosperity of Zion? Rest assured, you are altogether unprepared for either work, so long as you refuse to ratify your sacramental vows!

Your Christian name suggests another consideration, which should prompt you “to believe and do as they promised for you.” The highest title by which the family of Christ, and the people of God are designated, has been conferred upon you. There is none on earth, and none in heaven; neither prophet, apostle, nor martyr, who does not regard the name of CHRISTIAN as his most enviable and glorious appellation; not one, who, rather than bring reproach upon that appellation, would not cheerfully surrender his body to the flames. But, how do you regard the honour of this title, and the character of your station, by refusing to confirm the promise of your baptism!

Remember that, the very first time, in which your Christian name, was formally and officially uttered, was, when this promise was made on your behalf. It stands now, appended to the compact entered into between yourself and your God. O let it be a memorial to remind you of your covenant-oath; of your sacred profession; of your high privileges; of your dedication to Almighty God; of the station which you hold in the Christian Church; and of the rich inheritance, secured to you under this appellation; and thus let it remind you of your obligation to renounce all that God forbids; to believe all that He reveals; and to practice all that He commands. Let it ever preserve the recollection of your baptismal engagements, and keep alive in your mind, a deep sense of duty to live as becomes a disciple of the holy Son of God. Never, so long as you bear a Christian name,—never should those solemn engagements vanish from your recollection, nor that sense of your duty relax its hold upon your conscience.

The mark of distinction on your brow, enhances the force of this obligation. It separates you from the heathen world, which acknowledges not a Saviour, and refuses its assent to the truths of the Gospel. It indicates you to be a Christian; not, indeed, in heart, for then, this appeal would be unnecessary, but, a Christian in contradistinction to a heathen. Baptism is the badge of the Christian Church; the livery of the servants of the Great King, the insignia

of His soldiery. O, is it not a shameful degrading of this, the glorious mark of your high distinction, when you refuse to ratify the vow of your allegiance? Is it not a vile dishonouring of the noble insignia of your station, when you refuse to live as becomes it?

O, it is a sad reflection that so many of the children of the Christian household, differ in no important feature, from the children of the wicked one; that in the former, there should be so many points of striking analogy to the latter. It is melancholy to think that the badge of baptism, is the sole "mark of distinction" between them! Let it not be with yourself! Be it rather your manly resolve, and your strenuous endeavour, to honour, and adorn the badge of your station! Adopted into the family of a noble line, with what veneration would you regard its proud escutcheon! How sensitive would you be to the slightest insult, breathed upon its armorial bearings! How jealously tenacious of its honour! And shall you do less, when introduced into the family of the King of kings?

Another consideration will show that you are "bound to believe and do," as your godparents promised for you.

The sign of Baptism, it will be remembered, is an evidence and token of your CHRISTIAN PROFESSION; and this profession affords an additional obligation, by which you are urged to your baptismal duties.

It is objected that, this profession was made with-

out your consent? In interposing this objection, you are perfectly just and reasonable, if you are prepared to substantiate one point,—namely, that there is no shadow of reason, truth, nor justice in your baptismal profession. For, if there be, it was not without the most perfect propriety, that it was avowed on your behalf, though without your consent. You must be prepared to disprove every article, which it embraces,—to show that, we are under no obligations whatever, to “*die to sin, and rise again unto righteousness ; to follow the example of our Saviour Christ ;*” nor, to “*mortify our evil and corrupt affections.*” Your objection leaves the inference that, you discard the idea, that it is either your duty, or your interest, so to do ; or, in fewer words, that you repudiate the profession of the Christian faith ; or, in one word, that you acknowledge yourself to be a heathen or an infidel.

But, if you admit your baptismal profession, and avow the sentiments which it contains, it cannot be objected against, on the grounds whence you assail it, namely, that it was made for you, by others, and without your approbation. And this admission of its truth and justice, is equivalent to the acknowledgment that you are “bound to believe and do” as your sponsors promised for you. For, you avow your obligation to “*die to sin ;*” and what is this but a renunciation of “the devil and all his works ; the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires

of the flesh? You assent to your obligation to “*rise again unto righteousness* ;” and what is this, but believing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? You acknowledge that you “*ought*” to proceed, daily, “*in all virtue and godliness of living* ;” and what is this, but “obediently to keep God’s holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of your life?”

Thus, in avowing the three articles of your baptismal profession, you assent to the true conditions of the Baptismal Compact, and to the consequent duty of fulfilling them. “If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them!” but alas for him, who, sinking down to a lower depth of misery, than the wretched inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, shall be compelled to hear the upbraiding reproach forever grating on his ear,—

“Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.”

Your baptismal DEDICATION TO GOD, presents you with another motive, all-powerful in urging you “to believe and do, as the vows of the Sacrament require.

That act of your sponsors, approved and sanctioned by your own parents, gave the Almighty a claim upon you. Not that He had no *previous* claim. But by your Baptism, He became entitled to your love and to your service, by a solemn act, on the part of those, most anxious for your welfare. They gave

you up, soul and body to Him. They would not tarry till old age had crippled your energies of mind or of body ; until your affections were chilled by contact with the world, or your spirits bowed down, beneath a burden of sorrows. They would not present the blind, the lame, nor the halt, for sacrifice. No. They bore you in their arms to God's holy temple, whilst yet a little child; before the evil days had come, and "ere vice had time to gain upon you," and there, in the holy place where His honour dwelleth, they solemnly surrendered you to Him; deeming it a "*reasonable service*,"—presenting you as a gift; a gift, which He did not disdain to accept; and in receiving which, it was not necessary for Him, to compromise the dignity of His character.

"The flower tho' offer'd in the bud,
Was no vain sacrifice."

Belonging, then, by such a peculiar tenure, to Almighty God, you are bound to renounce all that He forbids; to believe all that He reveals, and strive to practice all that He commands.

Consider, moreover, that by baptism, you were enlisted in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ; by your sponsors, solemnly enrolled among the soldiers of the cross! As by an oath of allegiance, through them, you swore to "bear faith to your SOVEREIGN LORD, in opposition to all men without saving or exception." By the sanctity of your vow, you

are bound "to be true and faithful to Him, and truth and faith to bear of life and limb and earthly honour, and not to know or hear of any ill or damage intended him, without defending him therefrom."* The guardians of your infancy, knew that you could not serve under a Sovereign, more lenient in his government, more considerate in his requisitions, nor more mindful of the welfare of his subjects; that you could not fight under a better Leader; against a more hateful foe, nor for a more glorious prize! They know your inevitable ruin, if you should enlist in the service of the world, and sin, and Satan! They knew full well the deceitfulness and treachery of those malicious enemies; that although you should co-operate with them, in their fierce contest against the Lord Jesus Christ, they would, nevertheless, glory in your destruction. They knew that Satan, whilst he waged his mad warfare against the Church of God, burned at the same time with a feverish thirst, for the blood of those unhappy men, who were marshalled under his own banner. With the eye of faith they beheld the crown of glory, and the white robe, and the victor's palm laid up in heaven for the soldiers of Christ; and to secure for you that bright reward, on the one hand; and to save you from the ignominious defeat, and the consequent misery, to which on the other you were exposed; they deemed it the wisest course for them to pursue, to

* Blackstone's Comment. B. I. Chap. 10.

enlist you at once, in early infancy, under the banner of the cross; not even leaving you to stand upon neutral ground, where they knew 'twere impossible for you to stand at all.

The eloquent Wilberforce compares this act of your sponsors to that of Amilcar, who, with patriotic zeal, took Hannibal his son, yet a child, into the temple, and swore, in his name, eternal hostility to the enemies of Carthage. "After the same manner," says he, "Christians are become sworn enemies of sin; they will henceforth hold no parley with it; they will allow it no shape; they will admit it to no composition; the war which they have denounced against it is cordial, universal, irreconcilable."*

O, that the young soldier of the cross would be thus true to the Saviour's cause! O, that he would thus manfully fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil! Let him remember that the Christian warfare is against the most deadly enemies; enemies "which war against the soul;" that it is a contest with the bitterest foes of the best of fathers; a contest for holiness, for love, for liberty, for justice, for heaven! The cause of Christ is a holy cause: His service, a holy service, blessed in its work, and glorious in its reward! Never let it be regarded as the foes of the Gospel would fain represent it,—a state of degrading villanage, or of

* Practical View.

hard and insufferable servitude! No. It is freedom. It is more, His "service is perfect freedom," a service which elevates, ennobles, and purifies the heart!

Never let the young soldier be forgetful of that hour, in which his name was enrolled upon the glorious catalogue of saints, and martyrs, and apostles, and prophets; nor of that solemn deed, by which he was—

—————"Duly sworn,
With true and fearless mind
To serve the virgin-born."

Let him not forget that "great cloud of witnesses," intently gazing upon the sacred font, when he was there consecrated to this holy service! Christians who were gathered around to behold the interesting ceremony! angels and archangels! God, the Almighty Father! Jesus, the glorified Redeemer! and the Holy Spirit, all attesting the momentous transaction! Let him remember the sign of the holy Cross, then written upon his forehead, written not as an idle ceremony, but as a token that he "should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner!" Let the remembrance of all this rouse him from his unbecoming attitude of listlessness and unconcern, and give no sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he shall avouch the Lord to be his God!

O, if he be not now contending for Christ against his enemies, is he not a deserter from His cause? If he “adhere” to those enemies, and by his words, and his example, persist “in giving them aid and comfort,” is he not a traitor to his liege Sovereign? If he refuse to believe and do what the promise of his baptism requires, does he not virtually refuse to acknowledge his allegiance to Almighty God? And is not that again equivalent to the bold assertion, that he will not obey the high behests of the Great Triune; nor defend his cause; nor fight under the banner of the cross? Is it not tantamount to a declaration of hostility—the most foolish, the most shameful, the most wicked, towards each person of the adorable Godhead? O, I shudder to think how coolly and deliberately he lays his hand upon his forehead, and wipes off the sign of the hallowed cross! But, be it so! If he is not a manful defender of the gospel of the Son of God, *let* him wipe the sacred symbol from his brow! It is not meet that it should there remain! The “token” is dishonoured, the sign of the cross scandalized, for he *is* “ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner.” Let it therefore quickly be erased! Let him forever, and effectually, obliterate all traces of it from his forehead, for such a token should not remain upon the brow of him, who is ashamed of Jesus!

CHAPTER XII.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE BAPTIZED, GROWING OUT OF THE PRIVILEGES, THE FORMULA, AND THE VOW OF THE SACRAMENT.

MOST beautifully and truly was it said by an old commentator, that "God expects vineyard-fruit from those who enjoy vineyard-privileges." That this is a reasonable expectation, none, I presume, will deny; and if reasonable, how sad the disappointment, if the term may be allowed, when, so far from finding *vineyard-fruit*, He finds no fruit at all!

Gospel privileges, if valued and improved, become a priceless blessing to the soul; but, if slighted and unimproved, an awful curse; "a savour of death unto death."

By every consideration which they can possibly suggest to your mind, let them arouse you to the importance, and press upon you the obligation of bringing forth, immediately, that vineyard-fruit, which the great Husbandman expects; and thus, let them constrain you to the discharge of your sacramental duties.

Baptism has already been shown to be a means of grace; a channel, through which the Almighty vouchsafes to impart His spiritual blessings to the soul. When you determine to believe and do, as your sponsors promised, and have set out with the firm resolve, there is a larger share of grace imparted to you, than there would be to others, entering upon the work of their salvation. But remember, that grace will never flow into your soul, in any copious effusions, until you manifest some desire that it should. The channel may be opened, but the waters may not be there. God will withhold them, until he sees that you are thirsty, and desire to drink. Nevertheless, the channel is open, and your high privilege, indeed, that it is! In the work of religion you may have as many, and as serious difficulties to contend with, as the unbaptized; but then you have richer encouragements than they; your obstacles may be as great as theirs, but the grace vouchsafed to you is greater; your enemies may be as dreadful, but the powers of heaven are in league with you; weaknesses of your carnal nature may be as great as theirs, but there is an all-powerful spirit, pledged, in a peculiar manner, to help your infirmities! How much greater, then, is the guilt of your irreligion, than theirs! How utterly and entirely destitute of all excuse and palliation is your refusal to confirm the promise and vow of your baptism!

By this holy sacrament, moreover, it will be remembered, you become affixed to Almighty God, in

a new, close, and exceedingly interesting relationship; a relationship, which, whilst it enhances your obligations to serve him, affords you the most lively encouragements, and the most brilliant promises, in His service.

The very claim which the Almighty has upon your body, soul, and spirit, must make Him regard you with an interest, unequalled by any which is felt in the unbaptized. Nor is it at all surprising, that He should view with singular feelings of tenderness and concern, the adopted child of His own family; the sworn defender of His own cause; and the initiated disciple of His own Son. And then, there is your covenant relation to God! By the oath of a solemn compact, originating with Himself, He is pledged to become your Father, your Saviour, your everlasting portion, and your God! O, it can never be, that He should turn away from you with indifference and unconcern! Feelings of tenderest regard, and of deepest solicitude, must be cherished on your behalf; and as there is no forgetfulness with God, no variableness, neither shadow of turning, it must be with an interest subject to no abatement, to no interruption. With good reason, therefore, may you calculate upon a large measure of His grace,—a measure, proportionate to the regard which He entertains for His covenant people, when endeavouring to comply with the requisitions of your Baptism.

Not the least of your sacramental privileges, consists in having your title, hereby secured, to the rich-

est of all possessions. It was signed by God's own Ambassador ; sealed with His own seal ; secured by His own oath, and confirmed in His own covenant. Early were you taught to regard yourself, as "an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ;" but now it is time to learn that, a compliance with your baptismal engagements is necessary to make good your title, to that inheritance. This title, like many others of a secular nature, is a *conditional* one, and the conditions are, just what your godparents promised you should believe and do.

The faithfulness of God is pledged to bestow the covenant blessing upon you, and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one tittle of His word shall fail.

You have here a delightful encouragement, and a weighty obligation, both urging you to perform your part of the compact. God "is not man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent ; hath he said, and shall he not do it?—or, hath he spoken and shall he not make it sure?" So great is His faithfulness that David says it "reacheth unto the clouds,"—so sure, that Moses says, it lasts "to a thousand generations."

God has, of His own most gracious will and accord, entered into this compact with you, and while He holds you bound to comply with the conditions ; He holds Himself pledged,—with reverence be it spoken, to bestow upon you, for Jesus' sake, the blessing which the compact was designed to secure.

Let not the shadow of a doubt impair the confident assurance, which this faithfulness should inspire! On the record of His immutable word you may rely, that "He will ever be mindful of His covenant;" and on the evidence of facts, you may hope that, as He was faithful to others so He will, in like manner, be faithful to you.

The promise to Abraham was,—“I WILL BE THEIR GOD.” Now mark the blessings which this covenant-promise procured,—blessings, which, as they were not specified, not positively extended in it, served to render God’s faithfulness the more conspicuous, and His regard for His covenant-people, the more remarkable.

When the children of Abraham were bowed down beneath the oppressive yoke of Egyptian bondage, “God heard their groaning.” And why? He did not engage in His covenant to do so. Yet, it is expressly declared, that, the reason why He did lend an ear to their groaning, was because He “*remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*” (Ex. ii. 24) See Deut. vii. 8, 9.

To deliver them from their galling and oppressive servitude, He sent His dreadful plagues upon Pharaoh, and upon his servants. He divided seas before them. In the wilderness, He conducted them by a pillar of fire. When they were hungry, “he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.” When they were thirsty, “he opened the rock and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places

like a river." "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes." And why? He did not engage in his covenant to do so. Yet it is expressly declared that, it was all on account of His covenant with their fathers:—"For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant." See Psalm cv. 8—42. And finally, when Joshua led the armies of Israel into the promised land, and took possession, he said to the children of Abraham,—“Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things, which the Lord your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.” And yet, this was upwards of four hundred years after the covenant with Abraham.

He promised, moreover, to become **THE GOD** of Abraham, and of his faithful children. To show that He redeemed his pledge, and to give a lasting memorial of His faithfulness, He proclaims Himself to be “**THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC AND THE GOD OF JACOB;**” and expressly declares, this, to be the very reason, why He calls Himself by this name. See **Exod. iii. 15.** Hence also, you see the meaning of that designation, so frequently occurring throughout the Sacred Volume, “**THY GOD;**” “**THE LORD THY GOD.**” One reason of its frequent repetition, unquestionably is, to keep alive in the bosoms of His people, the memorial of His faithfulness, in performing His covenant-promise.

This promise, moreover, included the gift of eternal life. Did God bestow the gift of eternal life upon the fathers? He did;—for long after those holy men were dead, He continued to call Himself “THEIR GOD” and, He “*is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*”

Here, then, in this well-attested faithfulness, is your encouragement! It speaks the blessed assurance to your bosom, that the Lord will become your God also!

And now for the weighty obligation, hereby imposed. The plighted faithfulness of your covenant-God, whilst it gently moves you as in tones of sweetest music, should arouse and alarm you, as with peals of thunder. In one case it should operate upon you, by motives, softly persuasive; in the other, by motives, powerfully compulsive. This will appear from a single remark,—that the stronger the assurance of salvation, which the Almighty extends, the heavier is our obligation to accede to the terms. The greater the security, the greater the sin when it is slighted. And what greater security could be given, than that afforded us in the Sacrament of Baptism? Here is the express promise of the great Jehovah, to become your God; more than a promise, it is an oath; more than a simple oath, it is a covenant-oath, and that too, strengthened and supported by one essential attribute of the Deity,—His faithfulness; and sealed with a seal of His own appointment. Thus, you have the strongest possible assur-

ance, that the Lord will become your God ; that He will visit you with riches of His grace ; and finally admit you into the peaceful enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. How greatly is the force of your obligation to believe and do, what your sponsors promised, strengthened hereby ? Should you refuse, thus to “ *believe and do,*” how manifestly do you become, by this suicidal neglect, the author of your own destruction !

And, remember ! I earnestly beseech you, that whilst, as a covenant-child of God, you are doubly assured, by His covenant-oath, of an eternal inheritance ; you are, nevertheless, if unfaithful, doubly assured by an oath, of an eternal exclusion from that inheritance. It is an oath, yes, more than a simple declaration of your doom, an oath, that you *shall not* enter into the rest of heaven, unless you comply with the grand condition of the agreement, for, “ *to whom* SWARE *he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not ?*”

From these important considerations, it becomes your bounden duty to believe and do as your sponsors promised for you ; to take the Baptismal Compact into your own hands ; with your own voice, and by your own act, to make the vows your own ; to assent to the conditions and perform them.

Another motive to this duty, as animating in the encouragement which it extends, and as imperative in the obligation which it imposes, may be found in the formula of this sacred rite ;—“ Baptizing them

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We may reasonably believe and confidently hope that, as this is done by the authority of the Son of God himself,—the Father, Son and Holy Ghost all become, in a peculiar manner, interested in those who are thus baptized; and consequently, that each Person of the adorable Godhead is peculiarly willing to bless them in the work of Salvation, according to their respective offices,—the Father to pardon; the Son to redeem; the Spirit to aid, protect and sanctify.

With the baptized they are connected by ties of no common relationship, and their eternal welfare, they are all engaged to promote. The honour of the adorable Trinity is pledged. For in God's own way; according to His own direction; under His own authority; in His own name; and under a seal of His own appointment, they were brought into this covenant engagement with Him.

But remember, that as the honour of each person of the Godhead, is thus pledged to advance your spiritual welfare, when you manifest a disposition to ratify your sacramental vows,—so in like manner, that same honour demands your destruction should you fail to do so.

Let it be remembered, moreover, that as you were baptized *into* this hallowed name, you are, hereby, obligated to receive each person, as revealed in the Sacred Volume,—to "believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;" in

Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; and in the Holy Ghost, your Sanctifier, as one “who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.” Consistently with this baptism, your mind can entertain no heretical opinions upon these vitally important points. Discard this belief, and you annul your baptism, with all its honours, privileges and blessings! But if you would retain them, you must embrace these, the fundamental “articles of the Christian Faith,” not only in your understanding, but in your heart also; and throughout your whole life must worship, honour and serve the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Thus do we gather, from the formula of your Baptism, other considerations which declare it to be your interest and your duty, to renounce what God forbids; to believe what he reveals; and practice what he commands.

Apart from all this, there yet remains the weightiest obligation of all,—one, imposed by nothing less than a vow given to Almighty God.

But the important question, which, after all, is the hinge upon which this most sacred obligation turns, meets us at the outset—How is a child bound by a vow or promise, made for him without his consent? The Church Catechism says “which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.” Here I must be permitted to enlarge upon

a subject previously hinted at,* namely, the right of the parent to obligate his child. If this can be established the duty of the latter is plain, and must stand out in bold relief, arresting his attention, and calling for a faithful compliance.

Now I do not affirm *that an individual would be bound by any* vow, which his parent might choose to lay upon him, during the period of his infancy. Two conditions must attach to it before it can possess any degree of binding force:—first, that it require nothing but what is in perfect accordance with the strictest principles of truth and justice: Secondly, that some valuable benefit be thereby secured. Can you, now, advance a solitary objection against the vow of baptism, which militates against either of these conditions?

What did your sponsors bind you to do,—an *injurious* thing?

There is a deceitful enemy, and a deceitful world, and a deceitful heart, which may possibly attempt to impress you with that idea:—and, indeed, in a certain sense, it *may* prove injurious. It may expose you to scoffs and ridicule,—to “trials of cruel mockings,” from your ungodly associates. It may check your avidity in the accumulation of earthly riches. It may curb you, in the eager pursuit of worldly applause. It may call for painful mortification of the

* I must beg the reader to turn to page 85 for several other considerations which cannot be repeated here.

flesh; for self-denial, which will materially interfere with the gratification of your carnal appetites; and in this sense it may prove injurious. But, it is for yourself to determine, whether eternal life; the favour of God; and redemption from the curse of sin, be a sufficient counter-balance for these short-lived and sinful gratifications.

What, then, did they bind you to do,—an *unreasonable* thing?

If, to renounce the enemies of your soul, and the foes of your God, be an unreasonable thing, we must answer in the affirmative. If the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, be a “reasonable service,” then, we must admit that, it was exceedingly unreasonable to enlist you, in a uncompromising warfare against them.

If the word of God cannot rightfully challenge your credence;—if it be destitute of all credibility; and if His commands be grievous and exorbitant requisitions; certainly, then, they bound you to do what reason would not sanction.

Here then is your only alternative! You are compelled to embrace and defend this hypothesis, or else admit the reasonableness of your Baptismal vows. In rejecting the one, you choose the other. Which do you reject?

The discharge of your baptismal vows, whilst it is of vital consequence, so far as your future welfare is concerned, does not at all conflict with your temporal enjoyment. You are not required to abandon

harmless pleasure, nor the industrious pursuit of your calling ; nor lawful efforts to improve your property, but only those things, which do not comport with the holy service of your God and Saviour, and which cannot be entered upon with impunity ; those pleasures, and those employments, in which

“The pearl of the soul may be melted away.”

Bear in mind, moreover, that what your sponsors stipulated on your behalf, were the only terms upon which you could possibly receive the blessing of the covenant, which, as we have already shown, embraces every needful good for eternity. They are terms, laid down by the offended God himself, the party who, alone, has any right to propose conditions. We are rebel subjects—have broken His law ; have forfeited all right and title to His favour, and must be mute. It is for Him, the God of all the earth, to say how His rebel subjects may be restored, and if He consent to remit the merited punishment, and receive us again, as His children, upon *any* terms, O how gladly should we accede to them, and how grateful should we be !

If then, to renounce what God forbids ; to believe what he reveals ; and to practice what He commands, be neither injurious, nor unreasonable ; if it be directly the reverse, greatly beneficial and altogether reasonable, your godparents possessed the unquestionable right to lay upon you the vow of baptism.

The common concerns of life afford some apt illustrations of the exercise of a similar right, in cases precisely analagous. I might refer to that of a guardian, entering into a stipulation on behalf of his ward ; but the simplest case of civil contracts will answer my purpose better ; I refer to contracts of apprenticeship. The right of a parent thus to bind his child, has never been questioned. There are cases in which an indifferent person, in no way connected with the child, is empowered by law "to bind him where he shall see convenient until the age of twenty-one." And why? Because it is for the interest of the child himself; it is reasonable, and it is just. And is not the child, in such case, obligated by the indenture of his parent or friend? Are not all his services, his time, his talents, his skill "the profit and emoluments of his labour," hereby, and without his consent or approbation, secured to another?

If, then, the right of the parent be admitted in one case, it must be in the other also. If he may give any vow whatever, in the name of his child, or bind him by the articles of any agreement, he may, with far greater propriety, bind him by those of baptism. The obligations of the child which, in the former case have never been questioned, are, in the latter, equally beyond the reach of a denial. The same considerations enforce them in either case with this marked distinction, that in the Baptismal Sacrament, where Almighty God is, in merciful condescen-

sion, a party in the contract; where there is most pointed reference to the future destiny of the immortal soul; to interests, against which the interests of time should never once be weighed,—the obligations are far more sacred, and less easily evaded.

Had your parents contracted a thousand agreements for you in your infancy, and had they secured thereby as many rich advantages, they could not have made one more reasonable, in its conditions; more desirable in its advantages; nor richer in the good secured, than that of baptism.

But there is one consideration, which settles the right of your sponsors, to lay the vow of the sacrament upon you, and which justifies the Church, in declaring that you are bound to perform it. It is this,—that the vow of baptism calls for nothing more, than what you would have been bound to do, even were there no vow. The Almighty does not impose upon you heavy burdens, from which the unbaptized are exonerated; nor duties from which they are released. He does not make a solitary requirement of you, which He does not make of them. The only difference is, that you, by your baptism, are laid under *additional* obligations, to perform certain duties, which devolve upon all mankind. Your sponsors, by giving the sacramental vow in your name, desired to ensure, by the strongest possible security, your faithful discharge of these duties.

Now put all these considerations together, and see if, by any mode of reasoning, you can release:

yourself from the promise and vow of your baptism. Here is the natural right of your parents, and the vested right of your sponsors, to lay that vow upon you. Here is the authority of the word of God, sanctioning the exercise of this right.* Here is the nature of the vow, demanding not one thing injurious, unreasonable, nor unjust; not one thing, against which the unbiassed judgment can advance the smallest valid objection; not one thing, which would not have been obligatory upon you, even had no vow been given; and here is the priceless blessing secured, of having the Lord for your God! Now we ask, if this reasonable, just, interesting, holy and beneficial vow, honoured by the Church in all ages, sanctioned by the approval, and commanded by the authority of Almighty God, do not solemnly demand a compliance with the requisitions of your baptism? The evil heart may demur, but the evil heart is "*deceitful above all things*;" its whisperings, therefore, must not be listened to, but with the most suspicious and wary scepticism.

Will you attempt to impair the force of these obligations, by affirming that your parents and sponsors were insincere, when they presented you for baptism; or that they simply designed it, as a token of respect for religion; or as a compliance with long established usage?

To say nothing of the charge of basest hypocrisy, which you thus throw against your parents and best

* Page 85.

friends, and without stopping to inquire into the right, by which you become the judge of their motives, we may sift the objection and learn its worth.

We will, therefore, contrary to every thing which the Church pre-supposes, admit the fact of their insincerity, and all that you affirm respecting the unworthiness of their motives. But how does all this affect your duty ?

The profession, the promise and vow are the same whatever may have been their intention.

Would the Jew, who was circumcised at the instance of ungodly parents, have been released from the obligations then laid upon him ? Nay, would he have *desired* this release ? When he remembered that, by a faithful discharge of them, the best of blessings were secured ; when hope portrayed the promise of the covenant, in all its richness, and beauty, and value ; would he have sought to extricate himself from the vow, by pleading the impunity of motive, or the insincerity of purpose, on the part of those who were the means of introducing him into that covenant ?

If by such a plea, you hope to evade, and do actually renounce, the obligations of your baptism, you must consent that your offended Judge shall, on the same grounds, and for the same reason, refuse to become your Saviour, your Father, and your everlasting portion ! If you think to be released, by any such considerations, from performing your part of this blessed and glorious compact, you must agree

that your covenant-God shall be released by those same considerations, from performing His. When, from pity to your wretchedness, and in condescension to your weakness, He *obligates* himself by oath to save and bless you, O it is folly, and madness, and shameful ingratitude, thus lightly to esteem, and thus daringly to trifle with, the security which He gives you !

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

FROM the considerations which have now passed before you, I humbly, and most sincerely trust, you will be impressed with a deep sense of your baptismal responsibilities.

By motives, drawn from the relation which you sustain to your sponsors, to the Christian Church, and to your God; relations of the most lovely, interesting, and enviable kind; by your high and distinctive privileges; by the sacred and sublime formula of your baptism; and by the covenant oath do those considerations send their appeal to your conscience! Silent, respecting the golden promise, the brilliant allurements which it presents, and the inestimable blessings with which it is laden, they urge you to perform the conditions of the covenant, by motives of a more serious and solemn nature; nor can their voice be unheard, nor their appeal disregarded, without the most fatal consequences.

Your investiture with baptismal honours and privileges, affording as it does, so many inducements to a holy life, would only serve to aggravate the guilt

of your unfaithfulness, to render the depravity of your heart more conspicuous, and your everlasting destruction more certain. For, with great truth has it been said, that "every thing which you might have been the better for, if you had made a good use of it, you will be the worse for, if you make a bad one.* Thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell!" The guilt of unimproved privileges,—O how shocking! Have you ever measured its magnitude, or calculated its exceeding sinfulness? Turn to the accursed cities of the plain, and by their guilt, estimate your own! See them abandoned to the most shocking uncleanness! and sunk in the mire of the most horrible depravity! See the impious daring with which they set at nought the laws of virtue, and morality, and order and justice! Hear their blasphemies and imprecations, enough to turn the cheek of darkness pale! The cry of their wickedness goes up to heaven! The Judge of all the earth, grieved and offended, and incensed, can endure it no longer. Mercy and Pity, weeping, turn away from the devoted cities;—abandoning them to their doom. The vengeance of heaven, descends in showers of fire and brimstone upon them, and "the smoke of the country goeth up as the smoke of a furnace."

Do you start back, appalled, at such a signal exhibition of the wrath of God?—and do you shudder

* Archbishop Secker.

at the contemplation of their awful wickedness? Pause for a moment! There is a sin more hateful to God than this;—and there is guilt, in enormity, far surpassing theirs! That sin may lie at thy door, and that guilt may be thine! Privileges unimproved,—means of grace despised,—offers of mercy rejected,—the Gospel of Salvation refused, may all appear against you at the day of judgment. And what, if they should? “I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, than for thee!” What!—more tolerable for those abandoned, depraved, and wicked people than for thee! O believe it, if their guilt were greater than thine, God would not punish them less! Thy sin is more aggravated,—thine insult more offensive, and therefore, thy punishment “is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom.” Loaded with baptismal distinctions, privileges, promises and encouragements, how must the soul sink into the deepest anguish!

To aggravate your guilt to a still greater extent, and fill the cup of sorrow to the brim, there is the Church of Christ, dishonoured; her faithful disciples grieved to the heart; the Christian profession discarded; your dedication to Almighty God, thrown to the winds; your enlistment in the Saviour’s cause, contemned; the holy Sacrament, treated with scorn; the sacred vow, broken; and each person of the adorable Godhead impiously denied, disobeyed, and dishonoured by your life.

Says an eminent writer,*—"According to the plainest dictates of human reason, the malignity of the action must rise in proportion to the authority and excellency of the party offended, and the offender's relations and obligations to him." Ponder this, I beseech you! and learn from hence the malignity of your refusal to renounce, believe, and practice, what your covenant-God commands. Only see what complicated guilt is here,—the guilt of ingratitude and of treason; of disobedience, and of robbery; of unbelief, and of insult heaped upon every attribute of the Deity. O, if you should go down to the grave, with such accumulated guilt resting upon you, what must be the consequence? If summoned to the bar of judgment, with such tremendous charges alleged against you, what must be your doom? The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, all equally offended, will rise up, and with one voice condemn you to outer darkness! Far better on that awful day would it be for the poor heathen beside you, upon whose forehead, no baptismal seal was ever placed. No curses are there, so pregnant with the wrath of God, as the "*curses of the covenant*," for, with all their tremendous, and augmented weight, they must descend upon the guilty; mitigated by no palliating circumstances, but heated seven-fold by every consideration which could make them terrible. Dreadful was the wrath, denounced against the unfaithful

* Dr. Scott's Works, vol. iv. p. 32.

Jews!—plagues and sickness to scourge their bodies; brimstone, fire and desolation to scourge their fields and vineyards; and then the Lord would root them out of the land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land. And when it should be asked, “What meaneth the heat of this great anger?”—Men should say, and mark the answer!—“*Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers.*” (Deut. xxix. 24, 25.)

O, then, delude yourself with no vain hope of salvation, whilst living in daily violation and contempt of this sacred compact! That you are a child of the Christian family, may be true, but, like certain of old, you may be among those “*children in whom is no faith.*” That you are a plant of the vineyard of the Lord, may be true; but, like others in that vineyard, you may be “*a root that beareth gall and wormwood.*” (Deut. xxix. 18.) Like Israel of old, you may be among those whom Christ regarded as “*his own,*” but as of them, so of you, may it be said, “*his own received him not.*” That you are a partaker of Christ’s temporal kingdom may be true, but remember his own declaration, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather *out of his kingdom* all things that offend,” and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.” An awful thing, in truth, for the “*children of the kingdom*” to be cast into hell! That you are a branch of the Christian Church may be true, but

like many among the Jews, you may be broken off, and on the same account, for not fulfilling the grand condition of the covenant. "Because of *unbelief* they were broken off." (Rom. xi. 20.) The apostle warns you of your danger, and guards you against this great sin, declaring, "thou standest by FAITH," and if God spared not the Jews, "the natural branches" of his Church, "take heed lest he also spare not thee."

It was by the sin of unbelief, that this highly favoured people so flagrantly violated their covenant engagement, and excluded themselves, both from the temporal rest of Canaan, and from the eternal rest of heaven; and you, bound by the same covenant vows, are exhorted to "labour" to enter into that heavenly rest. And what is the argument employed? "*Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*" (Heb. iv. 11.) Well may this exhortation go direct to the hearts of the baptized, for woful and tremendous must be the fall, from such a high estate as theirs!

Do you attempt to solace yourself under these reflections, by a vain endeavour to impair the force of your baptismal obligations, and thus release yourself from them?

What is this but,—

"Taking a world of pains to be undone."

What is it, but bending your reason, and coining expedients,

"——— To buy

A wretched right to endless misery?"

And what if you should succeed in evading the requisitions of your Baptism? What do you gain? In rejecting a part you reject the whole of the compact. Cast off the vows, and by the same act, you throw up your interest in the golden promise! Abjure the conditions of the engagement, and by the same act you renounce all its distinctions and its privileges!

What then do you gain? Nothing but God for your enemy; an inheritance of eternal misery for your portion, and the place of torment for your home!

Thus by your own act, do you pronounce your doom! In the morning of life, long ere its sun has set, you stamp the seal upon your eternal destiny! A voice from thine offended God comes to thee saying, "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee." Thou hast abjured thy baptism! Thou dost hereby consent that I shall never become thy God, nor ever bestow upon thee a portion in heaven! "I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant." And then the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost all unite in casting thee off forever! Pause then, I entreat you,—pause ere you abjure your baptism!

But whilst these solemn considerations should constrain you "to believe and do as they promised for thee," the brilliant reward is held up to allure you! It calls you sweetly to the sacred altar once again,

to ratify your baptismal vows! It is an inheritance, which embraces all that is needful for the body and the soul; for death and judgment; for time and for eternity! The blessed assurance is given in your baptism, that the gates of heaven shall be thrown open before you, the moment you seek for admittance there! No enemies shall successfully oppose your progress to the land of promise above, if you will only go forward with a true and believing heart! Set out, then, in good earnest! Motives are not wanting! Here is the vow of the covenant to compel you; "*the curse of the covenant*" to alarm you; the grace of the covenant to aid you; and the promise of the covenant to entice you!

“ Begirt with truth, in pilgrim guise,
O follow where thy pathway lies,
Through foes or desert, field or flood;
Immortal, 'till thy work is done,
Unwearied, 'till the prize is won,
The Canaan that was bought with blood!”

Does the world with its pomps, and vanities, and sinful allurements, plead with your heart, attempting to divert its aim? O, your baptismal vows forbid all parleying with the world! Its sinful pleasures bloom not for you! Its idle mirth, its passing vanities, its painted baubles should have no fascination; its glare and glitter no charms for you! Its distinctions should not dazzle your eyes, nor en-

kindle the fire of your ambition! The brow which bears the sign of the hallowed cross needs not a wreath of earthly honours to adorn it!

“ Not amongst the pomps and gaudes of earth,
Is thy vocation! Thy high vow denies
To hoard its gold, or truckle for its smile !”

O beware of its encroachments! Allow its entrance into your affections upon no conditions! Tell the world that you belong to God,—that the vows of heaven are upon you! Tell the world that no wealth which it can offer can equal in value the rich inheritance, to which, by baptism, you are entitled! Tell it that no distinction to which it can elevate you, can dim the lustre of that which your baptism confers; that no service to which it can invite you, can equal the service of the Lord Jesus Christ; none so free, none so honourable, none so ennobling, none so glorious in its reward! And O, when the evil heart within you prompts to covetous desires for earthly good, remember your baptismal vows! When your bosom burns with unholy passion, or your cheek is flushed with unrighteous anger, remember your baptismal vows! If your heart entertain one motive; if it harbour one inclination; if it be the dwelling-place of one desire, at variance with the precepts of God's holy word, remember your baptismal vows! They bind you to renounce them all: without any exception, reservation, or restriction, to expel them from your bosom,

and lend no ear to their suggestions! Whenever the world, the flesh, or Satan, shall prompt or allure you to sin, revert to your baptism, and remember you are sworn to renounce them all!

In the early ages of the Church, a custom prevailed, which, whilst it served deeply to engrave these obligations upon the memory, must have imparted great solemnity to the deed. We are told that when a new convert was about to be baptized, he was led to the font and with his face turned to the west, where Satan dwells in darkness, he stretched forth both his hands, and solemnly vowed, saying, "Satan! I renounce thee, and all thy works, and all thy pomps, and all thy worship!!" And then turning to the East, whence light proceeds, he repeated the creed.*

It was also customary for those who were to be baptized, to be clothed in a white garment, which was carefully preserved in the Church, to be produced as a testimony against them, should they prove unfaithful to their baptismal obligations.†

Did this custom still prevail, how many of the baptized would be put to shame by the melancholy contrast, exhibited between the vestal purity of their baptismal garments, and the shameful impurity of their lives and conversation! How often, my

* Endin. Eucyc. s. v. Baptism.

† Those who have read the Pastor's Testimony will remember the affecting story of Elpidiphorus and Muritta. See also, for the same, Bingham's Eccles. Antiq.

dear young friend, might this testimony have been produced against you! O compare your life as it is, with your life as it ought to be! And, if an offence against the great Jehovah, do derive aught, of its guilt or of its turpitude, from the condition and circumstances of the offender, how black with guilt and turpitude must be the actions of your life! A child of the family of Christ, and yet bearing so strong a resemblance to the family of Satan! Possessing so much interest with God, and yet satisfied to be a poor outcast from His presence! Entitled, by covenant-oath, to His love, and refusing to accede to the conditions! Enlisted under the banner of the crucified Redeemer, and yet fighting against him! With the sign of the holy cross upon your forehead, and yet living as if the symbol of Satan's enmity to Christ, were placed there, instead! Baptized into the faith of the Gospel, and yet acting, as though you had been baptized into the creed of a rank irreligion! A Christian in name and by profession, but a heathen in heart and life! Distinguished from the unbaptized by high honours, and singular privileges, and yet resembling them in alienation from God! Sworn to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and yet taking them to your bosom, and submitting to their demands!

Humbling reflection!—that the comparison so completely fails! Sad inference for the goodness of your heart, that what you are, bears so faint a similitude to what you ought to be! How much more

humbling the reflection!—and, how much more sad the inference against you, when it is remembered how vastly important and weighty are the considerations, which exhibit the danger and sin of being what you are, and the happiness and glory, of being what you ought to be!

O, remember, it is not enough that honours, privileges, and promises are here bestowed upon you! There must be a holy life and conversation; there must be holy tempers and inclinations; holy desires and motives, according with those honours, privileges and promises. Your place must be at the Saviour's side and among the Saviour's friends, else your baptism avails you nothing. In this world, it distinguishes you from the unbaptized, by nothing but the *name* of Christian; in that which is to come, by nothing but more aggravated woes. Baptism, of itself, will never save the unbelieving sinner, nor will the sprinkling of water ever cleanse his conscience from its pollutions. As there was an outward, so also was there an inward circumcision;* as there was an outward so also is there an inward baptism:†—the outward sign, in either case, representing, emblematically, the removal of sin from the heart.

Why should it, here, be insisted upon, that this inward baptism can only be effected by the Holy

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

† That was an appropriate and beautiful inscription upon a font, ΝΙΨΟΝ ΑΝΟΜΗΜΑ, ΜΗ ΜΟΝΑΝ ΟΨΙΝ. *Wash my sin not my face only!*

Spirit? Baptized into the name of this Divine person, you may urge a successful plea, in suing for his renovating grace. But not for one moment, let an answer be anticipated unless you prove the sincerity of your plea, and the strength of your desire, by commensurate efforts, to have all sin removed from your heart.

Thus, my dear young friend, have I endeavoured to fix deeply upon your mind, a realizing sense of your Baptismal responsibilities. God grant a blessing upon the endeavour!—for earnestly do I, in common with your beloved parents and friends; with all the faithful people of God; with all the ministers of His Church, and with all “the family in heaven,” desire to see you, “in the presence of God,” renewing “the solemn promise and vow, that was made in your name, at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourself bound to believe and do all those things, which your sponsors then undertook for you.”

There is a peculiar fitness in the *time*, when the fulfilment of this duty is required at your hands.

The Church of Christ, your anxious foster-mother, aiming to forestall the great enemy, in his malicious designs against your soul, requires the ratification of the Baptismal vow, upon your earliest arrival at the age of discretion; before Satan can have time to rivet his chains upon you, and before the world can offer its illusive promises, intoxicate you with its pleasures, harass you with its cares, or fill your mind

with absorbing desires for its transient good. An immediate ratification, then of your covenant-vow, is urged and enforced by serious and most cogent arguments.

Nor is the necessity of an entire dependance upon the assisting grace of the Holy Spirit, less apparent.

How beautifully does the Church, with characteristic solicitude and fostering care, teach her young disciple this duty; urging him not to lean upon his own strength, but with becoming humility, to rely upon that, which cometh from above! Having instructed him in the three things promised in his name, and in his obligation to do them she now teaches him to form a happy and wise resolve, relying upon Almighty aid:—"Yes, verily, and *by God's help*, so I will." And, again, after having enumerated, more particularly, what he is to renounce, believe, and do, she thus addresses him in the language of tenderness and affection,—“My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, *without his special grace.*”

Far be it from me, then, to deceive you, by any false representations of the difficulties to be encountered. The vain world around, and the evil heart within you, will oppose many hindrances, and throw many impediments in your way. Every effort to overcome them, without the aid of an Almighty arm, must prove utterly abortive; every resolve, fall far short of its end. “You will contrive,

perhaps,"—says Archbp. Secker,—“ great schemes of amendment and goodness; but you will execute very little of them: or, you will do a good deal, it may be in some particulars; and leave others, equally necessary, undone: or you will go on a while, and then fall, when you thought you were surest of standing: or what seeming progress soever you make, you will ruin it all by thinking too highly of yourselves for it: or some way or another, you will certainly fail, unless the grace of God enable you, first to be deeply sensible of your own guilt and weakness; then to lay hold, by faith in Christ, on his promised mercy and help: in the strength of that help, to obey his commands; and after all, to know, that you are still unprofitable servants.”

O, then, let your unwavering reliance be placed upon that all-powerful arm, which will never deny its assistance,—which will never withdraw its support, when its assistance and support are valued. Enter upon this blessed work, and approach the sacred altar, with this noble motto engraved upon the palm of your hand, impressed upon your heart, and written upon your frontlet,—“**STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT.**”

Aided, then, by the grace of your covenant-God, and enabled “of yourself, with your own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, to ratify and confirm” the promise of your baptism, how ready will your heavenly Father be, for the sake of Christ His Son, and for the sake of His covenant

oath, to become YOUR GOD, and to confer upon you all that is implied in that comprehensive blessing! Enviably, then, does your lot become!—and enviable the lot of your parents, and of your sponsors! Vows and promises are all fulfilled; engagements are met; professions are true. Thus, through the Baptismal Sacrament, is your present and eternal welfare promoted; thus is the Church of the living God honoured; thus is the undivided Trinity revered; thus are the faithfulness, wisdom, and love of the great Jehovah glorified, and thus does He become “*the God of all the families of Israel.*”

May God Almighty enable you, by word and deed, to ratify and confirm your covenant-vow, and for the sake of that beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, may he “defend you with his heavenly grace, that you may continue his forever, and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more, until you come unto his everlasting kingdom!”

FINIS.



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